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BROUGHT TO BOOK.

VOL. II.





BROUGHT TO BOOK.



BY

HENRY SPICER, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF 'OLD STYLES'S,' 'BOUND TO PLEASE,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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BROUGHT TO BOOK.



IS IT POSSIBLE?

16 **T**HE expression may seem a strong one ; nevertheless, history bears out the bold assertion that there are few things in the world easier to accomplish than a declared impossibility. Any gentleman addicted to compilation might produce, in a very short space of time, a handsome volume descriptive of schemes and theories which—during, say, the last hundred years—have been authoritatively pronounced impracticable—are now in full swing, and provoke no more astonishment than the phenomenon of a hansom cab.

That craven spirit, so ready with its impossibilities, has, fortunately, two results—a good as well as a bad. If, on the one hand, it discourages the more timid class of philosophers, it stimulates the bolder to more minute and determined inquiry. There is no ingress here, sigh the former. If there be a road, let us find it, say the latter.

The key to every scientific mystery is not hung up outside the door. It is found in unlikely corners. It has to be scrubbed, fitted, tested, till, freed from the rust of disbelief, it suddenly slips into the corresponding socket, and a vast new sphere lies enfranchised before the student's delighted eyes.

Seeing what have been the realized issues of modern inquiry, it is sometimes amazing to notice through what an atmosphere of coy hesitation a new and reasonable theory has frequently to force its way, more especially if it partake of that character to which the much-dreaded charge of 'superstitious credulity' may by possibility attach. And yet it should *not* surprise us. Few have the courage to defy ridicule, to despise the despisers, and hold on their steady course of investigation and experiment, comforted—if that be necessary—by the recollection that derision, while it has rooted up some worthless weeds, has been equally directed against flowers of knowledge the most sacred and precious to the heart of man.

It follows that ridicule is not the best of weapons. It should not be used (as is generally the case) where nobler arms have failed, but when they have, on the contrary, vindicated their power, and there remain only the embers of a noisome life for the 'dagger of mercy' to extinguish. Recent days supply us with an example of this. No amount of ridicule prevailed—per se—to stifle 'spiritualism.' Its doctrines, though revolting to rational instincts, were, from



their peculiar character, unusually difficult of disproof. Our 'dagger of mercy,' by itself, proved powerless to kill. It was to its own innate worthlessness and inconsequence that spiritualism owed its fall.

However, the dual result before alluded to has ensued. The wide dissemination of spiritualistic doctrines provoked an amount of contradiction, in which there displayed itself an element of dogmatism so strong and so exacting as to stimulate even those who stood aloof from the original debate to somewhat closer inquiry into a branch of study hitherto not sufficiently pursued. It was perfectly possible to reject the follies and the frauds of 'media,' and yet examine the psychological bases on which these favoured individuals pretended to establish their power. It will not, therefore, be supposed that, in directing attention to what *may* be possible, the writer has any purpose of availing himself, for the propagation of a moribund absurdity, of pages so often and so honourably devoted to its exposure.

We come to the point at issue. Can the spirits of the departed reveal themselves, under any conceivable conditions, to the outward senses? To collate the mighty mass of testimony adducible in favour of such a possibility, would occupy an average lifetime; and then, where is the Solomon who shall decide? It is a question of veracity—of impression. Ghosts give no certificate, leave no mark, save on the mind and memory of the seer, and this mysterious countersign

is lost to all but him. We are cast back, for confirmation that will wholly satisfy our reason, upon the consideration of the question that heads this paper—‘Is it *possible*?’ Is it possible that pure spirit can communicate with spirit still incorporate, and that through the channels which are characteristic of this present state of being? If the freed can reach the captive spirit only through the latter’s material eye or ear, it would seem to infer the necessity of a corresponding material presence or tongue. If spirit could act on spirit irrespective of the fleshly bar, the revelation might be as distinct as if every outward sense had been accessory to it. Yet in no instance, that can be regarded as authentic, has it occurred that a mere mental impression has been the means of imparting those circumstantial details which give to what are called ghost stories such solemn tone and dread reality.

From hence arises a question which, in a paper intended to be suggestive, not argumentative, shall be dismissed in a few lines. Is it not *possible* that, in that convulsive moment which separates soul and body, there may be evolved a transient condition of being, which, neither body nor spirit—semi-material—possesses some of the attributes of both? It may be regarded as the veil of the disembodied spirit—a fluid vaporous essence, invisible in its normal state—but, for the brief space of its new condition, exercising some of the properties of matter.

If it be objected that this fluid substance, in a




form so subtle, can in no wise act on matter—cannot influence eye or ear, how is it that, from the most subtle fluids—electricity, for example—are obtained the most powerful agents? or why do mere changes of light exercise chemical action upon ponderable substances?

Granting the possibility of the existence of such a transition state, the supernatural features would be referable to the circumstance that the spirit, as the surviving and superior essence, accomplishing what was impracticable while it was wholly clad in clay, might annihilate time and space, and, in the image and reflex of the form from which it has hardly departed, be itself the bearer of the tidings of dissolution. Who can say but that these mysterious visitations, instead of being, as some allege, the suspension or supersession of natural laws, may prove to be rather the complete fulfilment of one of the most beautiful and interesting of the marvellous code?

Let us see how far the theory thus hastily sketched out is applicable to known examples.

If we commence with an instance so familiar to many readers as the famous 'Lyttelton ghost,' it is because that singular narrative supplies us with a double apparition—because, though related in many a mutilated form, it has never, to the writer's knowledge, been given entire—and because his—the writer's—mother, when a girl, heard it from the lips of an actor in the tale, Mr Miles Peter Andrews—a frequent guest of her father, Sir George Prescott, of Theobald's



Park, Herts. Sir G. suffered much from gout, and the hours of the establishment were usually early, but, on the occasion of Mr Andrews's visits, no one stirred till midnight. It was five minutes before that hour that Lord Lyttelton's ghost had appeared to him ; and though, at the time we speak of, fifteen years had elapsed, he was not wholly free from certain nervous emotions, which made him prefer to pass that never-forgotten moment in company.

It was in or about the year 1775 that Lord Lyttelton, while resident at Hagley Park, made the acquaintance of a family living a short distance off, at Clent, and consisting of the father, mother, son, and four daughters, of whom the eldest was married to a Mr Cameron, and had, it was said, demeaned herself in a manner to create some scandal.

Upon the death of the father of the family, which occurred in June, 1778, the intimacy increased, and the gay and agreeable lord was firmly established in the good graces of his 'Clentiles,' as he called them, to whom on New Year's Day, 1779—the last he was destined to see—he addressed an epistle burlesquing, with more wit than propriety, the language of apostolic writings, and of which a short specimen (needful to the narrative) must suffice:

'The first chap. of St Thomas's Epistle to the Clentiles.

'1. Behold, I will speak to you, oh, daughters of Clent, in the language of wisdom, and give you understanding in the paths of peace.

‘2. Look not, Eliza, upon men—yea, upon the sons of men—with an eye of concupiscence, saying, “I am not short-sighted,” for verily the wicked will beware of the intentions of the heart.

‘3. Take heed of thy ways, lest thou be like the foolish woman, even like Mary’ (the married sister), ‘who will repent as Magdalen repented.

‘6. As to thee, O Christian’ (afterwards Mrs Wilkinson), ‘remember after whom thou art called.

‘8. Go to—thou art brown, but thou art pleasant to look upon, and thy ways are full of pleasantness.

‘12. Thy mother putteth her trust in thee; be thou to her a comfort when her heart is sad, that she may boast of thee, and say, “I am the mother of Christian.”’

Compliments, mixed with too-suggestive warnings against temptations, addressed to the second sister, occupy the verses up to the twenty-second, in which he addresses the mother, a lady, be it remembered, of excellent character as well as exalted understanding.

‘22. Now unto thee, O Mary, the mother of Eliza, of Christian, and Margaret—to thee be all honour and praise.

‘24. Behold, thou art a woman of exceeding spirit—justice and temperance enlighten thy ways.

‘25. Yet thou art lonely, and a widow-woman, and the wickedness of man is against thee.

‘26. Trust not, therefore, to thyself, but take unto thee a helpmate, for so the Lord has appointed.

‘28. Trust thou to the honesty of a friend, and believe in the counsel of him who has understanding.’

Accepting this specious address in the spirit its author no doubt intended, the unsuspecting mother not only read it to her children, but encouraged the visits of the supposed moralist, until the young ladies, to the astonishment of all who knew Lord Lyttelton’s real character, were seen actually residing at Hagley Park ! The mother’s eyes were now open, but too late. She had lost control of the girls, and when, in September of this fatal year, 1779, Miss Christian accompanied his Lordship to Ireland, an Irish lady being of the party, the consciousness of her own indiscretion threw the unhappy lady into an illness from which she never recovered.

Early in November the party returned from Ireland, and being met by the two other sisters who had remained at Hagley Park, all went together to reside at Lord Lyttelton’s town mansion, situated in Hill-street, Berkeley-square. Here, on the night of Thursday, the 26th of November, occurred the famous vision, which, whether or not it may be held to connect itself with the event it purported to foreshadow, certainly rests upon evidence too strong to admit of rational question.

Lord Lyttelton’s bedroom bell was heard to ring with unusual violence, and his servant, hastily obeying the summons, found him looking much disordered. He explained that he had been awakened by

something resembling a fluttering white bird. Having, with some difficulty, driven this object away, he had been still more startled by the appearance of a figure in long white drapery—a woman of majestic presence—the image (as he afterwards averred) of the mother of his young guests.

‘Prepare to die, my lord,’ said the apparition ; ‘you will quickly be called.’

‘How soon—*how* soon?’ Lord Lyttelton had eagerly asked. ‘In three years?’

‘Three *years*!’ was the stern rejoinder. ‘*Three days*. Within that time you will be in the state of the departed.’

The figure vanished.

This incident made a deep impression on his Lordship’s mind. Making no secret of what had occurred, he related it not only to the party in his house, but to many friends—among others, to Lords Sandys and Westcote. The latter, who was a connection, and, after Lord Lyttelton, the representative of the house, made light of the matter, and advised him to devote his thoughts, preferably, to a speech he was to make in parliament a few days later.

Lord Sandys gave better counsel. ‘My dear fellow, if you believe this strange occurrence, and would have *us* believe it, be persuaded to make some change in your doings. Give up, by all means, that silly frolic you told us of—I mean, of going, next Sunday, I think, to Woodcote. But I suppose it is only one of your fine devices to make us plain people

stare. So drink a cup of chocolate, and talk of something else.'

The 'frolic' alluded to by Lord Sandys was a projected visit, on the Sunday following, to Woodcote, or, as it has been more recently called, Pit-place—a country-seat at Epsom, stated to have been won by Lord Lyttleton from Lord Foley at play.

That the apparition was discussed in the interval is further attested by Madame Piozzi.

'On Saturday, a lady from Wales dropped in, and told us she had been at Drury Lane last night. "How were you entertained?" said I. "Very strangely indeed," was the reply; "not with the play, though, for I scarce knew what they acted, but with the discourse of a Captain Ascough, or Askew—so his companions called him—who averred that a friend of his, the profligate Lord Lyttelton, as I understood by them, had certainly seen a spirit, who has warned him that he is to die within the next three days, and I have thought of nothing else ever since."'

No further accounts reached the Thrales until Monday morning, when the return of the scared party of guests from Epsom brought the first tidings of their entertainer's death.

Not quite the *first*. On the Sunday night, Mr M. P. Andrews, who had been invited to join the mad party to Woodcote, but had declined on account of an engagement to the Pigous, in Hertfordshire, had retired to bed at the mansion of the latter. At a few minutes before twelve—so he was accustomed

to relate—Lord Lyttelton ‘thrust himself between the curtains, dressed in the yellow nightgown in which he used to read, and said, in a mournful tone, “ Ah, Andrews, it’s all over ! ” “ Oh,” replied I, quickly, “ are *you* there, you dog ? ” and, recollecting there was but one door to the room, rushed out at it, locked it, and held the key in my hand, calling to the housekeeper and butler, whose voices I could hear, to ask when Lord Lyttelton arrived, and what trick he was meditating. The servants made answer, with much amazement, that no such arrival had taken place ; but I assured them I had seen and spoken to him, and could produce him ; “ For, here,” said I, “ *he is*, safe under lock and key.” We opened the door, and found no one.’

Let us see what at that precise moment was passing in Surrey. According to the testimony of Williams, Lord Lyttelton’s valet, whose story never varied in the slightest degree, and was confirmed in every particular by Captain Ascough, the party had arrived from London in the highest spirits, and, being joined by other young people of the county, prolonged their merriment until past eleven. Soon after that hour Lord Lyttelton, looking at his watch, observed :

‘ Well, now I must leave you, agreeable as you all are. I must meditate on next Wednesday’s speech. I have actually brought some books with me ! ’

‘ But the ghost—the ghost ! ’ exclaimed one of the careless party, laughing.

‘Oh, don’t you see that we have bilked the ——?’ (a coarse expression), returned his Lordship. (Another of the party affirmed that he had said ‘jockeyed the ghost.’)

He escaped from them, ran up to his chamber—one of the smaller—still shown at Pit-place as the ‘carved chamber,’ from the carved oaken facing to the doors. His servant had placed the reading-table, lamp, &c., and assisted his master to put on his yellow gown.

Lord Lyttelton then said: ‘Make up my five grains of rhubarb and peppermint-water, and leave me. But did you remember to bring rolls enough from London?’

‘I brought none, my lord. I have found a baker here, at Epsom, who makes them just as your Lordship likes.’ He was stirring the mixture as he spoke.

‘What’s that you are using? A toothpick? You lazy devil, go fetch a spoon directly.’

Williams hastened away, but had hardly quitted the room when a loud noise recalled him. His master had fallen sideways across the table, bringing it, books, lamp, and all, to the ground. He raised him.

‘Speak to me, my lord. My dear lord, speak!’

The dying man gasped and strove to answer, but ‘Ah, Williams!’ were the only intelligible words, and these were his last.

Williams, his watch in his hand, flew down to the revellers below.

‘Not twelve o’clock yet’ (it wanted five minutes),
‘and dead—dead!’

It remains to be added that, owing to circumstances never fully explained, tidings of the death of their mother, *on the Thursday night preceding*, only met the young ladies on their arrival in town on that dismal Monday.

The coincidence of the result with the previously-announced prophecy, suggested to the incredulous an idea that Lord Lyttelton had determined on self-destruction. A hundred circumstances united to negative this mode of explanation. Of a genial, easy temperament, immersed in the excitement of politics, a successful gambler and turfite, in a position of great prosperity, Lord Lyttelton could have had little inducement, at the age of thirty-six, to terminate a life which, to a man of his feelings and principles, left nothing to desire.

If, then, such a theory as has been suggested at the beginning of this paper may be regarded as *possible*, is it not under circumstances like these it might be found taking practical form? To whom would the dying thoughts of the heart-broken mother so naturally turn, as to him who had broken up a respectable home, blasted her children’s fair fame, and laid her on that couch, alone, to die? As for the solemn augury uttered by the visionary form, we know with what strange prophecy the words of the dying have been found fraught. How much more may not be imparted to them, as the speaker stands so

much nearer infallible truth, as on the very boundary-line betwixt the beings ?

With the single additional remark that Mr M. P. Andrews always declared that a compact existed between Lord Lyttelton and himself, that whichever departed first should visit the other, we turn to incidents of kindred character, but more recent date.

Several years ago (so commences a story related to the writer by a lady well known in London society), the brother of Colonel C. was killed in battle, leaving a widow and one little girl.

The widow subsequently married a German baron, and the little girl, Maud, was brought up entirely in Germany. The latter was about twelve years old, when her mother, being attacked with an illness that threatened to prove fatal, became very uneasy about the probable future of her child, and feeling one evening more depressed than usual, called the little Maud to her bedside. She warned her that their parting was near, and enjoined the weeping girl to write immediately to Mrs B. (a friend of many years' standing), entreating her to come at once, to receive her last embrace, and take charge of her orphan child.

Maud obeyed without delay, but the dying woman's eyes were not gladdened by the appearance of her friend. The summons had reached its destination, but the absence of her husband, without whom she felt unwilling to travel so far, had induced Mrs B. to postpone her departure, consoling herself

with the hope that her friend, being naturally of a nervous and desponding temperament, had somewhat magnified her own danger.

Mrs B. resided at Hampton Court, and here it was that, on the night of the ninth of November, a curious incident occurred. Retiring to her room between eleven and twelve, she rang for her maid, and the latter not appearing as promptly as usual, went to her still-open door to listen if she was coming. Opposite to her was a wide staircase, and up this came, noiselessly, a figure, which the lamp held by Mrs B. showed to be that of a lady dressed in black—*with white gloves*. A singular tremor seized her. She could neither stir nor speak. Slowly the figure approached her, reached the landing, made a step forward, and seemed to cast itself on her neck; but no sensation accompanied the movement! The light fell from her hand; she uttered a shriek that alarmed the house, and fell senseless on the floor.

On recovering, Mrs B. related minutely what she had seen, her memory especially retaining the image of the white gloves; but nothing more than the usual unsatisfactory solutions were propounded, nor does it appear that the occurrence was at all associated with the dying baroness in Germany.

In a few days, however, came a letter from little Maud, announcing that her mother was no more, that her latest thoughts were directed to Mrs B., and her sole regrets the not being permitted to embrace her before her spirit passed away. She had

died a little before midnight on the *ninth of November*.

Mrs B. hastened to Germany to claim her orphan charge, and then was added a noteworthy confirmation of the vision. Little Maud, in one of their conversations, observed :

‘Mamma had a curious fancy. On the night she died, she made the baron promise that she should be buried in her black satin dress—with *white kid gloves*.’

The request had been complied with.

The following example is of yet more recent occurrence, and took place in one of the large and fashionable mansions in the district of South Kensington, which had been taken by a family whose name can only be designated by the initial L.

On the first night of their occupation, the lady of the house, while arranging her hair at the glass, saw in the latter the reflection of the figure of a man. He was old, of strange appearance, and was seated in an arm-chair that stood near her bed. He wore a grey coat with a cape, and had spectacles.

The lady possessed strong nerves, and after the first moment of surprise, finding that the spectrum did not disappear, came to the conclusion that her vision was affected by some disarrangement in the system. Resolved to test it, she turned calmly round, walked straight to the mysterious object, and sat down upon its very knees! She found herself alone in the chair.

The next morning she sent for her doctor, and

related to him what had occurred, laughing merrily at the remembrance of her visitor's grotesque appearance. Observing that the doctor hardly participated in her mirth, she inquired if he for a moment believed that what she had witnessed had any material existence ?

‘I do not say that,’ was the answer, ‘but there is this singular coincidence in the matter, that your description of the man’s person agrees precisely with that of an old gentleman living—or, rather, who did live—a few doors from hence. He was missing all yesterday, and was found dead in a piece of ground prepared for building, late last night, with every appearance of having been murdered. His age, dress, his very spectacles, were exactly as you describe.’

An example of a similar kind happened two years since in Dumfries-shire. A man employed in the quarries was walking home late, by moonlight. Suddenly he came upon two objects lying on the road, which resolved themselves, as he approached, into the bodies of his brother and nephew, workmen in the same quarry, with whom he had parted, still at their work, half an hour before. Stooping to touch them, they faded into the white dust on which they seemed to lie ! In alarm and amazement, he hastened back to the quarry. An accident had occurred a few minutes after he had left, which cost several lives. Among the victims were his brother and his nephew.

Nothing would be easier than to fill fifty pages

with similar examples. These, however, will suffice to illustrate the theoretical principle on which we base the presumption of possibility. Of the differing modes of operation it is in vain to speak. One thing only seems clear, that it is not always, as in the case last quoted, a mere reproduction of the dying or deceased image, but is endowed with the power of presenting the appearance of action and vitality, and imparting impressions entirely foreign to such as would naturally arise from a contemplation of the scene actually passing.

The story of the Tyrone ghost—as famous in its day as that of Lord Lyttelton—would, if authenticated, have been only second in value to the less renowned—equally apocryphal—legend inserted in the parish register of Gately, Norfolk, in the handwriting of the Reverend Robert Withers, then (1706) vicar of the parish, relating how that, while Mr Shaw, ‘an ingenious good man, formerly Fellow of St John’s, Cambridge, sat smoking, reading’ (it may be surmised, dozing), ‘comes in, o’ the sudden, Mr Naylor—likewise of St John’s—who hath been dead this four years.’

The little embarrassment arising from the novelty of the position having been got over, the two gentlemen chatted together very comfortably for *two hours*, the only drawback being the somewhat unsatisfactory account given by the visitor as to the condition of certain old associates, who had, it was hoped, passed into a land of rest. Whether worthy Mr



Shaw offered his friend a pipe, or other refreshment, is not stated ; but, 'as he was going away, he asked him to stay a little longer. He refused. And I then inquired if he would be like to call again ?' (Perhaps a select circle of old Cambridge chums would have been invited to meet him !) 'No' was, however, the reply ; 'He had but three days' leave of absence, and, withal, other business ;' about which, it is to be presumed, he went.

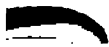
We may smile at the readiness with which the good minister attempted to give to what was manifestly a dream, the force of reality. But the Tyrone ghost, above referred to, rests upon a mass of testimony which, could it be brought to harmonize without flaw, could be only dismissed on the plea that it was a cleverly concocted experiment upon public credulity. It has been denied and reasserted times out of mind. Few tales so closely canvassed have been ultimately left in a condition of equal uncertainty. It has been conjectured that members of the Beresford family might be in the possession of particulars which, if they failed to elucidate the source of the narrative, might, at least, correct its inaccuracies. But neither hint nor challenge from the curious has produced any such evidence, nor is there special reason for believing that any such is in existence.

It is a little singular that the writer, while engaged on this paper, has received intimation that something of a remarkable nature has transpired

with regard to the case in question, having a tendency to corroborate what has been popularly believed. Lest this should prove true, we will recapitulate the story as shortly as possible, omitting minor details.

Lord Tyrone and Lady Anne Beresford were alike left orphans. They were of the same age, and under the care of the same guardian, who was a Deist, and who educated them in principles similar to his own. At the age of fourteen they were separately removed to other care, and efforts were made to indoctrinate them in the truths of revealed religion. These were only partially successful. The minds of the children were perplexed and unhappy, and, in one of their conversations (for their friendship continued as before), a mutual promise was made that, whichever should die first should appear to the survivor, and declare what religious faith was most acceptable to the Supreme Judge.

The young lady married Sir Marcus Beresford, with whom, after a considerable period of wedded life, she was one day seated at breakfast, when her husband noticed that she looked unusually pale, and, moreover, that she wore round one of her wrists a broad black ribbon. In allusion to the latter, Sir Marcus inquired if any accident had befallen her. She replied that he would never again see her without that ribbon ; but implored him to abstain from all inquiry, then, or ever, into the subject. Here for the moment the conversation ended ; but, during break-



fast, the servant entering with the post-bag, Lady Beresford became violently agitated, and exclaimed:

‘It is as I expected. He is dead!’

‘Who is dead?’ asked Sir Marcus, in surprise.

‘Lord Tyrone. He died on Tuesday, at four o’clock.’

The bag was found to contain a letter from Lord Tyrone’s steward, reporting his master’s death at the time stated.

A few months after this event, Lady Beresford, who had already two daughters, presented her husband with a son. When this boy was four years old, his father, Sir Marcus, died, and the widow withdrew into almost complete retirement, visiting no family but that of a clergyman, who, with his wife and a son, resided in the same village. To this son, many years her junior, Lady Beresford, much to the amazement of her friends, was married.

By this union she had two more daughters, but her husband proved a reckless and abandoned libertine, and they lived for some years separate, until his expressions of contrition led to a renewal of intercourse, and she subsequently became the mother of a fifth daughter.


It was about a month after this confinement that she is said to have summoned to her chamber a very dear friend, Lady B. C., and also her son by Sir Marcus Beresford (then a lad of twelve), and narrated the following particulars:

After admitting the compact between herself

and Lord Tyrone, before alluded to, she stated that being one night suddenly awakened, she saw his Lordship seated by the bed. She screamed aloud, and strove in vain to arouse her husband. A long conversation succeeded, in which Lord Tyrone informed her that he had died on Tuesday, at four o'clock, and had been permitted to present himself in this manner, and assure her that the revealed religion was alone acceptable to the Almighty. He foretold the birth of her son (the lad then present) and that son's marriage with his, Lord Tyrone's, daughter; the death of Sir Marcus; and her own marriage with her present husband, by whom she would have two daughters and a son. He also told her that she would die—after her confinement with the latter—in the forty-seventh year of her age.

All this, as they knew, had come to pass, but, up to the present day, she had concealed the prophecy of her death, because, from a miscalculation, she had believed herself now in her forty-eighth year, and, consequently, past the time of peril. This error, which she had only discovered the previous day, convinced her that her end was near.

Reverting to the spectral visit, she proceeded to say that, having doubts whether she was not wandering or asleep, she sought from the apparition some proof of his actual presence, upon which, at a wave of his hand, the crimson velvet curtains passed themselves through a large iron hoop which formed the canopy of the bed. He further wrote some words in



her pocket-book, and, finding her still dissatisfied, touched (with her consent, and after a warning) her wrist. The sinews instantly shrank up, the nerves seeming to wither, yet not so as to disable the hand. Cautioning her never to display this indelible token of his visit, Lord Tyrone disappeared.

‘When I am dead,’ she concluded, ‘as the necessity for concealment ends with my life, I wish that you, my friends, should remove the ribbon, and permit my son to see what it has hidden.’

With the utmost composure she made preparations for death, which ensued the same afternoon.

Her friend then unbound the ribbon, when the wrist was found to present appearances precisely such as might be expected from the narrative related by the deceased lady. The black ribbon and the pocket-book remained (in 1802) still in the possession of her friend, believed, it may be now mentioned, to be the Lady Betty Cobbe. Lady Beresford’s son married, as had been predicted, the daughter of Lord Tyrone.


Such is the outline of this remarkable story, a clear analysis of which, with comparison of dates and of facts asserted, with those actually ascertained, is beyond the limits of this paper. ‘Credimus, quia incredibile est’ (‘We believe because it is incredible’), is a hard saying to the many. It is only when we consent to gaze beyond the limited field of human knowledge and practical demonstration, that the incredible may be comprehended, the impossible overcome.

[NOTE.* Without presumptuously denying the possibility suggested by the esteemed writer of this paper, it is to be observed of such a story as Lady Beresford's that the alleged facts need to be very distinctly agreed upon. Lady Beresford's story may be called one of the leading cases. In the version of it which is the best known to us, Lady Beresford demands of the spirit some assurance of the reality of its appearance. The spirit then causes the large curtain at the foot of the bed to pass over the high tester, and asks is she satisfied *now*? She objects that although she could not climb up and do that waking, still, for aught she knows, she may be able to do it sleeping, and therefore she is not satisfied. The spirit then writes in her pocket-book which lies on a table at the bedside, and asks her, is she satisfied *now*? She objects that although she could not counterfeit that hand waking, still, for aught she knows, she may be able to do it sleeping, and therefore she is not satisfied. Then comes the touch upon the wrist and its shrivelling up. We offered the suggestion, some years ago, that this is very expressive of a state of sleep-walking or half-consciousness, in which Lady Beresford either actually did those two acts, or debated with herself the possibility of doing them; she being, either way, in an exceptional condition, presently culminating in a stroke of local paralysis. Or, the whole may have been

* Appended to the foregoing paper, in *All the Year Round*, by Mr Charles Dickens.

a diseased impression accompanying the paralysis ; as most of us have dreamed a long story clearly originating in its own catastrophe—some disturbing sound.

Of the broad margin of allowance that must always be left for coincidence in these cases, we had personal experience not very long ago. We dreamed that we were in a large assembly, and saw a lady in a bright red wrapper, whom we thought we knew. Her back being towards us, we touched her. On her looking round, she disclosed a face that was unknown to us, and, on our apologizing, said, pleasantly : ‘ I am Miss N——,’ mentioning a name, not the name of any friend or acquaintance we had, although a well-known name. The dream was unusually vivid, and we awoke. On the very next evening, we recognized (with a strange feeling) coming in at the open door of our room, the lady of the dream, in the bright red wrapper. More extraordinary still, the lady was presented by the friend who accompanied her, as Miss N——, the name in the dream. No circumstance, near or remote, that we could ever trace, in the least accounted for this. The lady came on the real commonplace visit, in pursuance of an appointment quite unexpectedly made with the lady who introduced her, only on the night of the dream. From the latter we had no previous knowledge of her name, nor of her existence.]






VERY OLD NEWS.

IT may not be universally known—but I have it from a gentleman on whose word much reliance may be placed—one Suetonius—that the first chief editor of the first daily paper was no less a person than Julius Cæsar. My friend does not indeed affirm that Julius opened an office in the aristocratic precinct of Summa Velia (Mount Palatine), or in the more commercial regions of Janus Summus and Infimus (Upper and Lower Bankers' streets), still less that he was actuated by any mercenary motives in making the first recorded plunge into journalism, and *that* at a period of his not inactive life when consular duties must have absorbed much of his time and attention. True it is that a man in his position, with his acknowledged capacity of doing three things at a time, and all to perfection, might have thrown in an editorship, and made a good thing of it. Such, however, was not his aim. We shall presently see what *was*.

Perhaps the very earliest suspicion of a regular paper was a certain serial, published under the supervision of the Roman priesthood, and limited to two classes of information — a register of births and deaths, and notices of the assumption of the 'toga virilis' (dress of manhood) on which interesting occasions considerable fees became payable into the respective treasuries of the temples dedicated to Juno, Lucina, Venus, and Juventas. A kindred tax, having reference especially to the first knickerbockers, might be introduced in modern times, with the double advantage of curbing the growing passion for that hideous garment, and contributing handsomely to the Exchequer.

The Emperor Augustus, for some unascertained reason, forbade the publication of the first description of announcement, but continued the latter.

Stephen Pighius, of the Low Countries, who, in 1599, published *Annals of the Magistrates and Provinces under the Romans*, presents us with some specimens of these early news-sheets, adding that they were given to him by James Susius, who found them among the papers of Ludovicus Vives. Further authentication would be superfluous, especially when it is mentioned that Dodwell, quoting them in his *Camdenian lectures*, together with some later examples (A.U.C. 691), states that he received them from a friend, Adrian Beverland, who had them from Mr Isaac Vossius, canon of Windsor, who transcribed them from a parcel of inscriptions prepared



by a gentleman named Petavius (probably Denis Petau, the Jesuit) for the press.

That certain other registers were in existence before Cæsar started his Daily News may be gathered from a remark in one of Cicero's orations (pro Syll.), in which he styles them 'tabulæ publicæ.' These, it is likely, were a kind of parliamentary report, having reference, almost exclusively, to the proceedings of the senate: which numerous, grave, and regular body could never have carried on their vast and various business without some such registry.


'Divus' Julius knew, as well as any man, that a purely parliamentary journal, published 'under authority,' and, by consequence, suppressing everything the public most desired to know, would be hardly satisfactory to the latter. On the other hand, it is undeniably repugnant to the genius of an absolute government that its councils should be publicly revealed. He might have furthermore reflected that the amusing topics supplied by the casual occurrences of a great city are so far from harmful, under such a constitution, that they rather serve to draw away the minds of the people from a too anxious scrutiny of state affairs.

In pursuance of this view, therefore, immortal Cæsar decreed the establishment of a publication which should combine instruction with amusement, and detail at once the acts of the people and their rulers. Perhaps by this single act may the hero

be said to have dealt a fatal blow at the aristocratic tendencies of Rome.

Great was the success of the imperial Daily News. (Cæsar called it 'Acta Diurna.') Its pages were quoted by the Roman historians, and appealed to by orators as an authority it would be presumption to call in question. The appearance of the oracle, at any distance from the city, was a time of jubilee. Tacitus tells us (*Annal. lib. 16*) that it was watched for with intense eagerness by the army, and the provincial population generally. And no wonder; for, in addition to the graver doings of government, Cæsar's Daily News furnished its readers with all the noteworthy occurrences of the seven-hilled city, its trials, punishments, elections, buildings, sacrifices, prodigies, deaths, accidents, offences, &c. Cæsar's staff of reporters ('actuarii') were active and intelligent men. We may be pretty sure that the colossal gooseberry, grown last year in the garden of Mr Bubfinch, at Hemel Hempstead, had its prototype in that of Publius Sergius Loquens at Ostia. An additional guarantee of authenticity was derived from the fact that the chief magistrates acted as Cæsar's sub-editors, and assumed the responsibility of every item of intelligence that was suffered to appear.

The daily issue (there were no evening or second editions) was, for certain cogent reasons, not equal to that of the journals of our day. The 'Acta Diurna' was not in a position to proclaim, with pardonable exultation, that its circulation on—say



the fourth of the nones of April—exceeded one hundred and seventeen thousand! It would perhaps be an error on the complimentary side to estimate the circulation of Cæsar's Daily News at from fifteen to twenty copies. Of these, one was carefully laid up, with other records, in the Hall of Liberty. The rest, after going the round of the city, found their way into the hands of the hungry news-seekers in the provinces, where they circulated with a rapidity that, even in those days, left few Romans of education and position long in ignorance of what was passing in the metropolis of the world.

We learn, from Cicero's epistles, that some small journal, of sporting tendencies, was already existing in Rome. 'Chrestus's Compilation' seems to have ministered to the fast young Romans the pabulum furnished by 'Bell' to the 'gentlemen sportsmen' of our own age.

Cicero's reference to this publication is the reverse of respectful. While governor of Cilicia, he had engaged his friend Cœlius to supply him with the news of Rome. Cœlius, either thinking that his friend's mind needed relaxation, or, perhaps, simply desirous of executing his task as completely as possible, enclosed, in his first letter, a kind of journal of occurrences in the city, but of so trivial a character that Cicero, much disgusted, hastily responds:

'Quid? tu me hoc,' &c. 'What! do you think that I left it in charge with you to bother me with



accounts of the matches of gladiators, adjournments of courts, and such-like articles, of which, even when I am in town, nobody ventures to speak to me? From you, O Cœlius, I expect a political sketch of the state of the commonwealth—not a Chrestus's newspaper!' (Epist. Fam. lib. 2.)

The following extracts, as close as possible to the originals, may give an idea of the form and manner of these announcements :

'A.U.C. 586, 5th of the kalends of April. The Fasces with Emilius the consul.

'The consul, crowned with laurel, sacrificed at the temple of Apollo. The senate assembled at the Curia Hostilia, about the eighth hour, and a decree passed that prætors should give sentence according to the edicts, which were of perpetual validity.'

(Imitated by the fashionable prints of two thousand years later :

'His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, attended by Sir William Knollys, rode on horseback, and presided at a meeting of the Belgian reception committee.

'The House of Lords assembled at five o'clock, and, ten minutes later, adjourned for a fortnight.')

'Fourth of the kalends of April. Fasces with Licinius the consul.

'It thundered.' (One might have imagined this information superfluous ; but the proceedings of Jupiter 'Tonans' were, perhaps, habitually chronicled.)

'This day, Marcus Scapula was accused of an act of

violence, before Caius Babius, prætor. Fifteen of the judges were for condemning him, and thirty-three for adjourning the case.'

(Scapula could not complain of a thin bench, nor, had 'Babius' been all his name implies, could he have required more aid in the discharge of his official functions.)

'Third of the kalends of April. Fasces with Emilius. It rained stones on Mount Veientine.' (Ahem!) 'A fray happened in a tavern, near the Alban Mount, in which the keeper of the "Hog in Armour" was dangerously wounded.

'The Ædile, Tertinius, fined the butchers for selling meat which had not been inspected by the overseers of the market. The fine is to be appropriated to build a chapel to the temple of the goddess Tellus.

'Postumus, the tribune, sent his beadle to the consul, that he should not convene the senate on that day; but the tribune, Decimus, putting in his veto; the affair went no further.' (Disgust of Postumus!)

'Pridie kal. April. Fasces with Licinius. The Latin festivals were celebrated. A sacrifice performed on the Alban Mount, and a dole of raw flesh distributed to the people.

'A fire happened on Mount Cœlius. Two trisulæ' (houses of the rich, standing apart) 'and five dwellings were burned to the ground, and four damaged.

'Demiphon, the famous pirate, who was taken by Licinius Nerva, a provincial lieutenant, was sacrificed.



‘The red standard was displayed at the capitol, and the consuls obliged the youths who were enlisted for the Macedonian war to make a new oath in the Campus Martius.’

‘Kal. Apr.

‘Paulus, the consul, and Cn. Octavius, the prætor, set out for Macedonia, in the habits of war.

‘The funeral of Marcia was performed, with greater pomp of images than attendance of mourners.’ (An ill-natured remark, and one we should have hesitated to disinter, but for the very trifling nature of the probability that it should wound the feelings of Marcia’s surviving friends.)

‘The Pontifex, Sempronius, proclaimed the Megalisian plays, in honour of Cybele.’

‘Fourth of the nones of April.

‘A ver sacrum’ (a vow to sacrifice an ox or sheep, from between the kalends of March and the pridie kalends of June) ‘was vowed, pursuant to the opinion of the College of Priests. Presents were made to the ambassadors of the Etolians. Eleusius, the prætor, set out for Sicily.

‘An entertainment was given to the people by Marcia’s sons, at their mother’s funeral.

‘A stage-play was acted this day, being sacred to Cybele.’

‘Third of the nones of April.

‘Popilius Lenas, C. Decimus, and C. Hostilius were sent ambassadors to the kings of Syria and Egypt, in order to accommodate the differences about

which they are now at war. Early in the morning they went up, with a great attendance of clients and relations, to offer a sacrifice and libations at the temple of Castor and Pollux before they began their journey.'


The following extracts belong to a series of the same publication, when about one hundred and twenty years old. These are fuller and more entertaining than the former: the art of journalism having progressed as rapidly as everything else under imperial Rome. But we must be content with a few short examples:

'Syllanus and Muræna, consuls. Fasces with Muræna. Third of the ides of March.

'Muræna sacrificed early in the morning at the temple of Castor and Pollux, and afterwards assembled the senate in Pompey's senate-house.'

'Fifth of the kalends of September. M. Tullius Cicero pleaded in defence of Cornelius Sylla, accused of being concerned in Catiline's conspiracy, and gained his cause by a majority of five judges. The tribunes of the treasury were against the defendant.' [The judicial power at this time was, by the Aurelian law, divided between the senatorial and equestrian orders and the treasury tribunes, who were plebeians.] 'One of the prætors advertised by an edict that he should put off his sittings for five days, on account of his daughter's marriage.

'A report was brought to Tertinius, the prætor, while trying causes, that his son was dead. This was




contrived by the friends of Copponius (who was accused of poisoning), that the prætor might adjourn the court; but the magistrate, having discovered the falsehood of the story, returned to his tribunal.' [The prætor was one of the chief magistrates, whose office was first instituted A.U.C. 388, and received its name, a præeundo—going before. At Rome the prætors appeared with much pomp. Two lictors preceded them; they wore the prætexta; they sat in curule chairs, and appeared in public on white horses.]

'Fourth of the kalends of September.

'The funeral of Metella Pia, vestal, was celebrated. She was buried in the sepulchre of her ancestors, in the Aurelian road.'

This office, the vestals', dates, it will be remembered, from the very commencement of the Roman empire, the mother of Romulus being a vestal. It was required that they should be of good family, and without blemish or deformity in any part of the body. For thirty years they were to remain in the greatest continence, the first ten years being spent in learning the duties of the order, the second ten in discharging them with sanctity, the last, in instructing such as had entered the novitiate. Their employment was to watch and feed the sacred fire, kept perpetually burning in the temple of Vesta, the accidental extinction of which was held to be the forerunner of some great calamity to the state. Severe punishment awaited the culpable custodian. She was condemned to the




punishment of slaves, and, covered only with a thin veil, underwent the scourge at the hands of the pontiff.

A more terrible penalty awaited the vestal who violated her vows of chastity. Nay, so strictly were these vows interpreted, that the mere probability of yielding to temptation was deemed sufficient. A vestal was condemned to death for having owned that, but for the pleasant prospect of a subsequent marriage, she would prefer to die. ('Moriar, nisi nubere dulce est.')

Roman journals, such as have come down to us, give no details of these awful executions. With an ominous reserve, it is merely announced that the culprit 'suffered.' Criminal as she was, the dignity and sacredness of her office clung about her to the last; and the unhappy creature went to her lingering death with the pomp and solemnity that might befit a royal funeral. But what followed?

'There is,' writes Plutarch, 'near the Colline gate, a small, deep cavern, the descent to which is by an orifice capable of admitting a human body. Within this are placed a small couch, a lighted lamp, a loaf of bread, a cruse of water, a phial of oil, and a bowl of milk, in order that religion may not be offended in permitting to die of hunger an individual consecrated with ceremonies so august and holy.'

Sad and mournful was the day in Rome that witnessed one of these terrible processions winding, in



awful silence, through the crowded ways—the people standing aloof, with eyes nailed upon the moving tomb (a litter so constructed as not only to conceal, but almost to stifle the cries of, the miserable occupant), which passed toward that darker tomb beside the Colline gate.

Arrived there, the lictors removed the veils and shutters, and the high priest—after murmuring mysterious prayers, never heard but by his order—drew forth the wretched criminal, and guided her shuddering feet to the ladder, down which she had to descend into her living grave. The ladder was then withdrawn, and the aperture closed, and covered with earth in such a manner as to leave no mound or trace; this, to signify that she who had been left beneath was alike unworthy to be reckoned among the living and the dead.

The vestals were abolished, and the fire of Vesta extinguished, by Theodosius the Great.

From the last-quoted paper—4th kal. Sept.—we moreover learn that the censors made a bargain that the temple of Aius Locutius (a celestial gentleman whose supernatural voice warned the Romans of the approach of the Gauls, in the time of Camillus) should be repaired for twenty-five sesterces (about four and twopence): a thrifty bargain by the censors, and well deserving a place in the *Acta Diurna*.

Finally, we learn that Q. Hortensius harangued the people 'about the censorship and the Allobrogian war,' two topics so far asunder as to engender a sus-

picion that Q. Hortensius, having got the public by the ear, did not know how to relinquish his hold. And, last of all, advice arrived from Etruria, that some of the late conspirators had begun a tumult, headed by Lucius Sergius.

Now, this is a rather curious paragraph. It would seem, as a matter of course, to apply to the conspiracy of Lucius Sergius Catiline, which was hatched in Etruria. But Catiline's conspiracy had been completely quashed before this date, a fact, of course, well known to the conductors of the *Acta Diurna*. It probably meant that disturbances had been renewed by certain of the conspirators who had hitherto escaped detection. But Lucius Sergius, stated to be 'at their head,' was as dead as Guy Fawkes.


In examining these old-world records, we arrive at the conclusion that if, on the one hand, we find the same conciseness, clearness, and simplicity, which distinguished the inscriptions upon the medals and public monuments of the ancients, they are, on the other, deficient in that sprightly humour, and those happy turns of expression, which give charm to modern diurnal composition.

In *one* material ornament of style our Roman gazettes were woefully deficient. They never hint or mystify. If it rained stones on Mount Veientine, they simply record the shower. If an ox or an ass spoke, they record, as tersely as possible, the observations offered by that animal. If 'cultivate the

gods' was found legibly written on a pig's interior, the exhortation was gravely published for what it was worth. They never conclude with such hints as 'this matter excites the profoundest speculation,' or 'interest hourly increasing,' 'no one can foresee the result,' &c., &c. Far less do they commence with such incertitudes as 'we hear,' 'we are credibly informed,' 'it is widely whispered.'

The ingenious excuse for a downright fabrication, 'it wants confirmation,' seems to have been wholly unknown to those plain dealers and speakers, nor do they seem to have been at all awake to the advantage of popping in an occasional falsehood one day, in order to revive it in the public mind by a flat contradiction on the next. There is no exaggeration, no compliment. The prætor's very daughter is married, and we are left in darkness as to the young lady's beauty, merit, dower. We know simply that her sire postponed his 'sittings' for five days (the act of a doting father) in order that the nuptial festivities should have full swing.

There is one more characteristic of these journals which should not escape attention: their constant reference to religious ceremonies. Scarcely a day passes without some sacrifice or festival to propitiate the gods, and implore their blessing upon the arms and the councils of the State. Like the immortal narratives of the Roman historians, from Livy to Marcellinus, they abound with recitals of the performance of religious duties, while, at the same time,



they recount the most absurd and ridiculous prodigies with all the gravity due to historic truth.

With this latter exception, the *Acta Diurna*, meagre as its details were, was a thoroughly honest and reliable publication. In illustration of every description of historical fact, it would have been of inestimable value to the historian and man of letters; and the loss of the complete series has left a void which the most painstaking research can never fill.





PROLL. A MYSTERY.

IN the last will and testament of Mr John Smith, of Allsop-terrace, Halifax (the instrument may be consulted by the incredulous at the usual expense of a shilling and patience), will be found a paragraph to the following effect :


‘Also, I give and bequeath to “Proll,” whatever or whomsoever that may prove to be, his or her heirs or legal representatives, the sum of three thousand pounds Three per Cent. Consolidated Bank Annuities, desiring that my executors, hereinafter named, shall make every reasonable effort for the discovery of the aforesaid “Proll,” his or her, &c. ; which efforts shall comprise an advertisement, thrice repeated, in a leading London Journal, as well as the local papers of Liverpool and Birmingham. And, in default of such efforts proving successful within a year and a day, then my said executors shall expend the fund aforesaid in the purchase of some sufficing tokens for the reward of any remarkable deeds of personal

prowess, which shall be and occur within three years of my decease.'

The singular wording of this bequest created much local interest at the time, and attracted an unusual amount of attention to the character and history of a harmless little man, who might have otherwise slipped out of this bustling world as noiselessly as he had dwelt in it.

Mr John Smith was the only son of a Halifax apothecary, who left him at his death, which did not occur until the 'boy' was past forty, the possessor of an income of five hundred pounds a year. John had been destined (in his cradle) for his father's profession; but nature, in the form of a peculiarly timid and susceptible temperament, raised such objections, that the project had to be abandoned, and trout-fishing in summer, and snipe-shooting in winter, formed the leading occupations of the young man's life, until these sports were interrupted, for a season, by the decease of his respected sire, and the consequent duty of looking into his own affairs. This discharged, Mr John returned to the snipe and trout with undiminished ardour.

The change in his habits was, indeed, so slight as to be hardly perceptible. Even the two old servants, husband and wife, who had, from time immemorial to *him*, formed the domestic establishment, and whom he (John) had, from kindly motives, dismissed, superannuated, with a handsome allowance, insisting that Master John was not getting on nicely without



them, came quietly back ; dismissed, without the slightest ceremony, the provisional maid ; and resumed their accustomed duties with all the vigour of youth !

John Smith has been described, by a gentleman who lived in his immediate neighbourhood, as an under-educated but well-mannered little man, with a pug nose, watery eyes, and a funny little flickering smile, which seemed to have been caught from the ripple of the brook over which it had been his delight to hang since boyhood. Take John Smith altogether, body and mind, he was perhaps the very last individual in the world to whom anything romantic or mysterious was likely to attach. And yet John Smith *had* a romance and a mystery ; and (like a queer little parenthesis in the social annals of the world) here we chronicle the same, taking up the history about two years subsequent to the commencement of John's orphanhood.

Although Mr Smith had never been in the habit of giving regular dinner-parties, it was a frequent custom with him to invite two or three of his chief gossips to partake of a brace of Wandle trout, most of which, weight, condition, disposition, and all, were (while yet in their native element) so well known to that experienced fisherman, that it must have been like diminishing the circle of his personal acquaintance to dine upon them. These, with a neck of mutton, and any pretty little tiny kickshaw, such as Justice Shallow with commendable judgment dele-

gated to his cook, formed a light and pleasant banquet, which left the intellect clear, and temper sweet, for the rubber of threepenny whist that wound up the evening.

It was on one of these festive occasions that attention was drawn to the first of a series of remarkable objects, which seemed altogether out of keeping with the modest adornments of the Smith mansion. It was a massive silver chalice, of most beautiful workmanship, displaying three compartments, on which were represented scenes from the 'taur-machia,' or classic bull fights. It stood upon a blue velvet-covered pedestal, beneath a glass case, which, while it permitted a full inspection of the masterly devices on its gleaming sides, protected the exquisite object from dust or soil.

'Hallo, Jack, that's a fine thing!' remarked friend number one, suddenly awakening, as it seemed, to the merits of the 'thing' to which he had been sitting opposite for half an hour. 'I must put on my specs for this. *Magnificent*, by jingo! Look at it, Gripper. Toro—*what*? Was this your father's, Jack?'

Mr Smith coloured and hesitated.

'Well, no. My father he didn't seem to care much about them sort of things; but, I say, Gripper, just you try that brown sherry. Join us, Peters, will you?'

'If I were to be guilty of the vulgarity of appraising a man's property at his own table,' said Mr

Slade, the curate, 'I should be disposed to affirm that the individual who became possessed of that chalice at anything under three hundred and fifty pounds, was a lucky fellow.'

'Where upon earth did he get it?' said friend number three to friend number four. 'I didn't give our host credit for tastes of this kind.'

'Aha! There's a mystery, I take it, about that chalice,' remarked the ungrateful Gripper, who, even while swallowing the brown sherry, intended to silence him, had noticed the embarrassment of the little host. 'I must examine more minutely;' and he stretched out his hand towards the cup.

Smith caught him nervously by the sleeve. 'Not for worlds, old fellow! Let it alone, can't you?' he gasped; and sank back into his chair with a perceptible shiver. Mr Slade adroitly turned the conversation.

Several months passed, yet the surprise created by Mr Smith's purchase had not wholly subsided, when a second and yet more costly object made its appearance in the drawing-room at Allsop-terrace. This time it was a gigantic vase, than which may be seen (especially in Germany) many baths of smaller dimensions. It was composed of about equal quantities of gold and silver, and was, like its predecessor, surrounded with devices of the rarest mould—the subjects, in this case, being suggestive of stirring incidents of the chase, or war. The rich cover was crested with the design of a matador (in solid gold)

giving the finishing touch to a white Andalusian bull in a frenzy of silver. It must have been worth, at the very lowest estimate, a thousand guineas.

Mr Smith was as reticent and as embarrassed as ever, and his friends had to fall back entirely on conjecture.

What in the world did it mean ? Could the donor have been some grateful patient of the deceased apothecary ? But no ; for why conceal what would be so honourable to all the parties concerned ? Could it be that a sudden monomaniacal passion for objects of this description had possessed John Smith even to the absorption of full two years' income in a single purchase ? Hardly *that*, for he was sane and shrewd enough in other things. And, besides, how would the timid, nervous little gentleman have been able to summon the courage and decision required to complete such a bargain ? The curiosity on the subject grew almost into pain.

'Come now, you know ; tell us, old fellow, where these gold and silver mines of yours are situated ?' inquired the somewhat rough-mannered Mr Gripper, adopting that frank tone which, indeed, was fairly his own, but was intended, on this occasion, to invite a corresponding frankness.

'I—I don't know what you mean,' replied Mr Smith, the wan smile flickering in and out of his irresolute face, like a damp wick that will not ignite kindly.

'Now, I'll tell you what, my friend,' resumed Mr

Gripper, setting his teeth in the truculent manner which always warned his interlocutors that he was going to say something very unpleasant indeed, '*I see it all.*'

Mr Smith looked disturbed, but it was not the agitation of one whose secret is on the point of being discovered. On the contrary, it was with something that seemed like curiosity, that he ejaculated, with unusual emphasis :

'Then wh—what the devil *is* it ?'

'There's a woman, and a woman with money, you lucky dog, in the case.'

'In what case ? 'Where ?' gasped Mr Smith, in sudden terror.

'In love with *you*, that's all !'

Mr Smith turned deadly pale. His hair, had its constitution permitted, would have assumed an erect position.

'Heaven forbid ! In love with *me* ? What ever have I done ? Come, Gripper, you're always ready with your chaff, *ain't* you, now ?' said poor little Smith, almost piteously. 'Say you're a-quizzing, now.'

'Truth, John, is kindest,' replied the inflexible Gripper. 'It is my painful duty to arouse you to the fact that you have, wittingly or otherwise (*I* am not your judge), ensnared the affection of some confiding woman, with a good balance at her banker's, whose homage, in the form of gifts, you, with a baseness of which I should have believed you in-

capable, do not scruple to accept, intending, all the while, to—to—in fact,’ concluded Mr Gripper, shortly, ‘to throw her over.’

‘Over *what* ? Who ? Which ? What *are* you talking about ?’ stammered poor Smith. ‘I wish, Gripper, you wouldn’t be such a fool !’

‘Fool, sir !’

‘And don’t talk so loud, please,’ continued the other, looking nervously round. ‘You don’t know who might hear, and perhaps believe your chaff ; for it *is* chaff, now, ain’t it ? Come, be neighbours, now, and don’t let’s have no more of this.’

‘That will wholly depend upon the course I see you adopt,’ said Mr Gripper, guardedly. (He was a good-natured man, and loved a joke, but his serious manner, and a gloomy look he had the gift of assuming at pleasure, frequently imposed upon his friends.) ‘Now, sir, unless you think fit to communicate the whole of this nefarious plot to me, I—I will not answer for what, as a matter of honour and humanity, I may not feel bound to do.’

‘Plot ? Whose plot ? Why do you talk to me as if I was a Guy Fawkes ?’ pleaded poor Smith, in a tone of such distress that Mr Gripper all but abandoned his joke.

‘From whence come these magnificent presents ? And why, sir, do you colour and hesitate when questioned on the matter ?’ retorted Gripper, sternly. ‘No one suspects you of having stolen them. As little could you afford to become their purchaser ;

and where the deuce you came by the judgment to select them, if your funds permitted, is the greatest mystery of all. There is but *one* solution ; *that*, sir, which I have suggested. As man to man, I demand—yes, demand—an explanation.’

Mr Gripper folded his arms, and called up a frown of extraordinary gloom.

Perhaps he overdid it a little. Perhaps a dim consciousness that Mr Gripper had no more business with the matter than the Tycoon of Japan, awoke, in the gentle bosom of poor little Smith, the slumbering man. At all events, with an energy he was never known to display before or since, he confronted his scowling friend, and, making the most of the niggard stature meted out to him, boldly replied :

‘Then, sir, I refuse ; and the sooner you can make it convenient to quit my house, the better.’

‘Quit your house?’ echoed Mr Gripper, dismissing his frown and joke together. ‘Not till I have shaken hands with one of the heartiest and pluckiest fellows in the whole range of my acquaintance. By Jove, Smith, what a spitfire you are becoming!’

‘Think so?’ said Mr Smith, rubbing his hands, and at once returning to good humour. ‘No, no.’

‘Couldn’t you *see* that I was only chaffing you?’ asked his friend ; and, shortly after, took his leave, much disgusted at not having been able to discover the secret.

Greater surprises were in store. Mr Slade, who was rather near-sighted, was entering one evening

his friend's always open hall door, when he was startled by a flash of steel and gold, and a tall, menacing figure, armed with a glittering lance, seemed to be about to make a target of his breast. Mr Slade reeled instinctively back against the door, and then perceived that his assailant was only the case of a warrior; being, in fact, a magnificent suit of Milan armour—silken surcoat and all, complete—and which, being placed across a mighty block of wood, in default of a steed, represented a knight in the tilt-yard in act to charge. A diadem encircling the wrought helm, denoted that this costly equipment had enclosed the limbs of some chivalrous prince in ages passed away.

The good curate was still rubbing his eyes, and marvelling at such an object encountered in such a place, when Mr Smith bustled in.

‘Why, Smith, what have you got here? My good friend, this is a treasure indeed!’

‘Ah! I thought you’d like my Lazy Sally, and was ’oping you’d look in,’ replied the virtuoso. ‘There, you needn’t go too close. It looks ’alf as well again at a distance,’ he added nervously.

‘Your Lazy Sally!’ ejaculated Slade. ‘Why do you call it so?’

‘’Cause that’s its name,’ retorted Mr Smith. ‘Look ’ere!’ and he pointed to a device and legend on the shield borne by the kingly champion.

Short-sighted Mr Slade put on his glasses, and made out, for device, a bull’s head and neck encircled

by a broken chain ; and, for motto, the well-known words in which the marshal of a tournament gave signal to engage :

‘Laissez aller.’

‘Lazy Sally ! I said so,’ exclaimed the lover of art. ‘I wish it wasn’t quite so big, though. Where ever it’s to stand——’

‘Why, Smith, you are collecting quite a museum ?’ remarked the curate. ‘You will want a custodian shortly.’

‘Well ; I don’t think it’ll come to *that*,’ said Smith. ‘I shan’t outrun the constable.’

Mr Slade laughed, and observed that his friend had slightly mistaken his meaning.

The curate’s prophecy seemed likely to come true. Other objects of art continued to arrive at uncertain intervals, until not a room in the house but could boast of at least one rich and beautiful specimen, selected by a taste as pure as the expenditure it must have involved was liberal. Mr Smith’s collection arrived at the value of, at least, fifteen thousand pounds ; and it was not unusual for persons in the county, who delighted in such things, to travel considerable distances to visit the accomplished proprietor, and congratulate him on his acquisitions and the refined art-knowledge which dictated their selection. The suit of Milan armour was an especial attraction, and was rendered more interesting by the circumstance that an inscription had been discovered on the breastplate beneath the surcoat. It had,


however, been purposely obliterated, and now only conveyed a suspicion that it had been in modern English, without affording any clue to its significance.

Thus matters went on, until the 'unmoved Fates,' who spare the harmless as little as the oppressor, knocked at the quiet door in Allsop-terrace, and imperatively demanded the body of Mr John Smith.

The pretence was this. One day, towards the closing of the trout-season, when your sworn piscator grows keen and jealous of his diminishing sport, Mr Smith—while in the heat of a life-and-death contest with a four-pound patriarch, whose time (John felt) was more than up, slipped down the bank, and into a deep pool. He was, it is true, rescued by some husbandmen, and fished up, not only alive, but victorious, still holding to his prize. But the results were serious. The poor little man caught a cold that set its fangs in his delicate chest, and ultimately sucked away his life.

When conscious of his approaching end, he sent for his friend Slade, and requested him to allow himself to be named co-executor with their gossip, Tom Gripper, to carry out, among other things, a purpose he had greatly at heart. It need hardly be said that his old friend consented, and, thereupon, John Smith disburdened his mind of a little romance of private life, which may possibly be held not unworthy of a page in these records of the rolling year.

About twelve years before, and about three years subsequent to his father's death, John received a



mysterious consignment, which, being opened, revealed that exquisite silver chalice which first attracted his neighbours' curiosity. A card accompanied it, on which, in a beautiful female hand, were written these words :

'To J. S. From the deeply grateful and admiring PROLL.'

And, in plain but unobtrusive characters, below the rim of the chalice, was engraven :

'To the intrepid Smith.'

Perplexed in the extreme, John carefully laid up the chalice, hoping that the mystery would in some manner elucidate itself, and not without fear that he might be suddenly called upon to account for appropriating what was certainly intended for another of his by no means uncommon name. And 'Proll?' Who on earth was 'Proll?' *Was* it Proll? Yes. There was no mistake as to the spelling. Poll might have been more natural, more familiar. No. Proll it *was*.


All doubts, however, were dispelled by the alarming receipt of the second present, the vase, accompanied by a note from 'Proll,' expressing her regret that Mr Smith's modesty—a quality that always attends true courage—should have deterred him from exhibiting to his friends the former testimony of her gratitude and enthusiastic admiration. 'I *know* you,' Proll concluded, 'John Smith, of 9, Allsop-terrace, though you know not *me*. And *your* Proll, your grateful but invisible protectress, Proll, will I remain until my dying day.'

'Whatever I've done for to make anybody so grateful,' said poor little Smith, his wan smile wanner than ever, 'I *can't* understand.'

Slade could not help him on this point, so, to turn the conversation, asked his friend why he had evinced so marked a disinclination to having Proll's gifts closely examined?

John seemed embarrassed for a moment, then he said :

'Well, it don't matter now ; so here's the truth. Some of my friends—not *you*, Slade' (affectionately pressing his hand), 'ave been in the 'abit of chaffing me 'cause I was a nervous sort of timid chap, and these cups and things of Proll's seemed as if they was a-chaffing too. Every one of them, you see, 's talking of my courage, my 'ardihood, and so forth. There's a motter on each. On the vase was written, "To the brave, devoted Smith." On the stomach of that harmour, was "Tribute to death-defying 'ardihood, in the person of the noble-'arted Smith." And so 'tis in all of 'em. Somehow, though I couldn't bring myself to believe that Proll was laughing at me in her sleeve, I knew it would set those fellows off, so I scratched out the writing on the harmour's stomach, and wouldn't let no one look too close at t'other things, you see. Now, what I want you for to do is this,' continued the invalid, raising himself on the pillow. 'O' course, this is all gammon. Proll must be a lunatic. I never did her any service. How could I, as have lived quiet here, since I was



born? I feel as if I'd been taking money and gim-cracks all my life from Proll's family, which may want 'em. There may be old Prolls, or little Prolls, or—In short, my good friend, I have made up my mind to leave a thumping legacy to Proll, at all events, and you must find her out if you can. I know you will try. And, if you can't,' concluded the speaker, faintly, for he was getting wearied with his long speech, 'there shall be a clause providing rewards for other brave chaps like *me*, you know,' he smiled, 'so that, perhaps, somehow, after all, the right J. S. may come in for one of Proll's pretty thingumbobs.'

Later the same evening, as Slade again sat beside his friend, awaiting the solicitor who was to receive instructions for the intended legacy, the curate quietly revived the subject of Proll's mysterious gifts.

'You are quite *certain*—think, now, John—that you have never been in a position to render some extraordinary and timely service to this Proll?'

'Never, on my word,' said Mr Smith, emphatically.

'It is very singular,' resumed Mr Slade, pondering. 'Do you know—but tell me, first, has any event of real importance, such, I mean, as would remain among the best-remembered incidents of an ordinary experience, ever occurred to you, that might, indirectly, perchance, connect itself with this enigma? Think.'

John reflected.

‘Except that—in June, ’forty-two—I landed——’

‘Yes?’ cried his friend, eagerly, observing that he paused. ‘You landed. How? Where?’

‘In the pool, below the weir,’ replied Mr Smith, faintly. ‘I landed him—in twenty minutes—with a single gut—brown partridge fly. He weighed nine pounds and a hounce!’

Mr Slade fell into another reverie. Suddenly he resumed:

‘It occurs to me, Smith, as not a little remarkable, that every one of these mysterious offerings contains some reference to an *ox*.’

‘A hox!’ ejaculated the invalid. ‘Hox?’

‘Or bull. It is an ancient sacrifice, a bull-fight in the arena, or even a crest or device, as in the armour instance. Now *that*, to my mind, has a decided significance. Did you ever—say in your reckless youth, my friend—have a misunderstanding with a bull?’

‘I!’ exclaimed poor Smith. ‘Stay though. With a hox, I *’ad*.’

‘Ha!’ said the curate, brightening up; ‘how was that?’

‘I was a walking quietly down Hollow-cross lane, when there come a-bellering be’ind me; and a man rushed past, crying out that a hinfuriated hox had broke out, and was coming down the lane! I heard him tramping, and ran on; but there was a quickset hedge on each side, and no gate. So I made a tremenjious leap, and got over.’

‘And were in safety?’

‘Why, no,’ replied Mr Smith. ‘The haggraving beast had previously adopted a similar course, and was in the field before me. I saw his great broad forehead, heard a shriek (but whether ’twas my own voice or somebody else’s, I am afeard to say), and, being knocked down insensible, knew nothing more, till I woke in my own ’ouse, with Hannah bathing my ’ed.’

‘Then the matter is as unaccountable as ever,’ remarked the curate, with a disappointed sigh.

The conversation was never renewed, for poor little Smith was beginning to sink, and two short days comprised all that was left of his inoffensive life.

More than scrupulously did the friendly executors endeavour to fulfil the duty imposed on them; but their quest of Proll was unsuccessful. They had ceased the hopeless inquiry, and had begun to consult as to the best mode of carrying out the alternative measure provided by the will, when, one morning, a visitor sent in his card to Mr Slade.

‘Colonel Commerell.’

The colonel, who appeared about forty-five, and whose countenance was bronzed by an Indian sun, was a man of stately presence, and frank, yet gentlemanly, manner.

‘I am just returned, sir,’ he said, ‘from a long period of foreign service, during the latter part of which my communications with home have been somewhat irregular. My attention has only now

been directed to your advertisement addressed to "Proll."

'God bless me! are *you* Proll?' exclaimed the curate, starting from his seat.

The colonel laughed.

'Well, no,' he replied. 'My *wife* is. At her desire I am here to explain what, judging from the terms of your advertisement, has remained too long a mystery. So, poor Mr Smith is gone? Well! Peace to the brave.'

'Ehem,' said Mr Slade. 'To be sure. Yes.'

'It was an act, sir,' said the colonel, enthusiastically, 'worthy of the brightest age of chivalry.'

'You don't say—that is, do you think so?' said Mr Slade, cautiously.

'Indeed, I do. But let me relate, in a few words, what you don't know of this matter.'

('You might relate what I *do* in fewer still,' thought Mr Slade.)

'When I was a jolly young cornet,' continued his visitor, 'I had the good hap to engage the affections of one who—God be praised!—is still the blessing of my home. She was an only child: heiress, in prospect, of very great wealth. Her father looked to unite her to a member of the noble house with which he was already distantly connected, and, having some suspicion of our attachment, hurried Rosina off, for a time, to the residence of a relative who lived in a sequestered neighbourhood three miles from hence. Singularly enough,

my regiment was ordered into this very district. Quite as remarkable was it, that my wife's father never knew of that coincidence. So palpable an interposition of fate was not to be neglected. We met as often as possible. Show myself I dared not in the quiet walks of Copfold. So Rosina mounted a rough pony, made over to her by her aunt for excursions beyond the park limits, and flew across to meet me in the willow meadows, near Hollow-cross Farm.

'On one of these occasions she had tied up her pony in the little copse, and was tripping across a field, when she was alarmed by distant shouts, and, turning, found herself within twenty yards of a furious bullock, which had plunged through a gap in the hedge, and was making directly for her. She had given herself up for lost, when a man—a little man, too—with a desperate bound, cleared the hedge, and threw himself between her and the raging animal! That prompt and generous action probably saved her life. She was preserved. So was *he*! for the farm people were at hand, and Rosina, from behind the hedge, could perceive that, though knocked down, her champion was not gored, and was receiving all the assistance his case demanded.

'Well, sir, the interposition of friends reconciled Rosina's father to my suit. We were married, my wife receiving a magnificent dowry. One of the first uses she made of it was to commence that series of grateful offerings, which doubtless reached their destination. The mystery was rendered necessary

by my wife's unwillingness to let it be known how indifferently that dear old lady at Copfold had fulfilled the office of her keeper. Hence, she adopted for her name a nursery appellation, which has, you will observe, about as striking a resemblance to the real one, as such pet names usually bear. Poor, gallant Smith! Well, well! The remembrance of such an act of heroism may—modest as he was—have brought with it a certain sense of satisfaction. Yet, had any one whispered so much in his dying ear, he would probably have faltered out: "Merely my duty." "

Mr Slade coughed.

'Courage, colonel, I have heard, is constitutional, and——'

'I don't know about that,' returned the colonel. 'For my own part, though I have seen a shot or two, and stood my ground no worse, I hope, than others;—if I saw a mad bull preparing to charge, hang me if I shouldn't be inclined to turn tail, provided there was cover at hand!' And the colonel looked as little like a man who would keep his word herein, as he could well look.

'I am at least certain,' said Mr Slade, in a low voice, 'that had our departed friend been more fully sensible of the service he had rendered, he would have felt deeply grateful for having been the instrument of so providential a deliverance.'

'As meek as he was intrepid, eh?' said Colonel Commerell. 'A beautiful combination! And now

let me complete my mission. Proll, that is, Mrs Commerell, positively refuses to hear of "anything to her advantage," resulting from Mr Smith's will, save the gratification of knowing that the brave fellow remembered her. Your solicitor, whom I saw in my way hither, favoured me with a copy of the codicil. My wife will most gladly co-operate with you in carrying out the admirable object of rewarding deeds of self-devotion. It is a thing we rarely do in England, where duty—no matter to what extreme it be carried—is popularly, though I think erroneously, believed to provide its own reward.'





WHAT WAS IT?

MANY years ago—not much less, I am concerned to say, than fourscore—it fell, in the line of professional duty, to the lot of my uncle—great-uncle, you understand—then a young officer of engineers, to visit, of all spots in the earth, the Shetland Isles. His journey, as stated in his note-book, from which this remarkable incident is taken, was connected with the intended restoration of Fort Charlotte—a work of Cromwell's day, intended for the protection of the port and town of Lerwick, but which came to considerable sorrow in the succeeding century, when a Dutch frigate, storm-stayed, devoted an autumn evening to knocking it about the ears of the half-dozen old gentlemen in infirm health who constituted the garrison.

On the evening that preceded his departure from Chatham, my uncle appears to have given a little supper of adieu, at which were present Captains Clavering and Dumpsey, Messieurs Chips, Bounce, and The Tourist.



Whether the last three gentlemen belonged to the service or not cannot be ascertained. The army-lists of that period have been searched in vain for their names, and we are driven to the conjecture that the sportiveness of intimate friendship may have reduced what was originally 'Carpenter' to Chips, and supplied the other two gentlemen with titles adapted to their personal merits or peculiarities.

From my relative's memoranda of the over-night's conversation, it would seem to have taken, at times, a warning and apprehensive tone ; at other times, to have been jocular, if not reckless. The wet blanket of the party was Dumpsey, whose expressions of condolence could hardly have been more solemn had my uncle been condemned to suffer at daybreak, with all the agreeable formalities at that time incident to high treason !

Chips appears to have followed the lead of Captain Dumpsey, and (if we may assign to him certain appalling incidents of the North Seas, to which my uncle has appended, as authority, 'Ch.') with considerable effect. Mr Bounce seems to have propounded more cheerful views, with especial allusion to the exciting sport his friend was likely to enjoy in those remote isles ; while the Tourist has, to all appearance, limited himself to the duty of imparting to my uncle such local information as he was able to afford. In fact, so far as can be guessed, the conversation must have proceeded something in this fashion :

‘Tell you what, old fellow,’ Dumpsey may have said, ‘going up to this place isn’t exactly a hop across Cheapside. If there’s any little matter of—of property, in which I can be serviceable as administrator, legatee, and so forth—after your—in the event of your remaining permanently within the Arctic circle—now, say so.’

‘Prut!—Pshaw!’ probably said my uncle.

‘The kraken fishery has been bad this year, they tell me,’ said Chips, quietly. ‘Otherwise, our friend might have secured a specimen or two, and moored them as breakwaters in the Irish Channel.’

‘A fellow I know did nearly as well,’ remarked Bounce. ‘Bill was bobbing one day for codfish in rather deepish water—thousand fathoms or so—when there came a tug that all but pulled his boat under. Bill took several turns round a cleat, and, holding on, made signals to his sloop for assistance. Meanwhile his boat, towed by the thing he had hooked, set off on a little excursion to the Faro Islands; but a fresh breeze springing up, the sloop contrived to overhaul him, and secure the prize. What do you think it was? You’d never guess. A fine young sea-serpent, on his way to the fiords, fresh run, and covered with sea-lice as big as Scotch muttons!’

‘I should, I confess, much like to learn, from rational sources,’ said Captain Clavering, ‘whether these accounts of mysterious monsters, seen, at long

intervals, in the North Seas, have any foundation of truth.'

My uncle was disposed to believe they had. It was far from improbable that those wild and unfrequented sea-plains had become the final resort of those mighty specimens of animal life, which it seemed intended by their Creator should gradually disappear altogether. Indifference, the fear of ridicule and disbelief, the want of education, preventing a clear and detailed account—such, no doubt, had been among the causes tending to keep this matter in uncertainty. It was not long since that a portion of sea-serpent, cast upon the Shetland shores, had been sent to London, and submitted to the inspection of a distinguished naturalist, who (the speaker believed) pronounced it a basking shark.

My relative's voyage must have been made under auspicious circumstances, since, notwithstanding a brief detention at Aberdeen, a heavy tossing in the miscalled 'roost' of Sumburgh, and a dense fog as they approached Lerwick, the good ship dropped anchor in the last-named port on the tenth day.

There were no inns, there are none *now* in Shetland, and my uncle took lodgings in the house of Mrs Monilees, than whom, he observes, no woman ever less deserved her name. Living must have been cheap in those days, for Mrs Monilees boarded, lodged, and washed her guest, for eighteenpence a day, and declared she made a handsome profit of him; the only 'lee' of which my uncle ever suspected her.

Fort Charlotte was not a work of any remarkable extent, and my uncle's survey and report of all the Dutch had left of her, were very soon completed. His orders being to await an answering communication, which could scarcely be expected to arrive in less than a fortnight, abundant leisure was afforded for making excursions in the neighbourhood, and he resolved that the first should be directed to the lovely bay and ruined castle of Scalloway.

It was then the custom—if it is not still—to walk out upon the moorland, catch the first pony you fancied, take him whither you would, and turn him loose when you'd done with him. Arming himself, therefore, with a bridle and pad, my uncle stepped upon the moor, and speedily captured a likely-looking sheltly that had an air of pace. The pony seemed perfectly aware what was wanted of him ; and, having hastily rubbed noses with a friend—as if requesting him to mention at home that he had been pressed by an obtrusive traveller, but hoped to have done with him, and be back to supper—at once trotted off without guidance towards Scalloway.

The day was fine overhead, but certain misty wreaths—the skirts, as my uncle conjectured, of an adjacent sea-fog—kept sweeping up the valley, crystallizing pilgrim and steed with a saltish fluid, and melting away into the blue.

It was on the lifting of one of these gauzy screens, that my uncle found that he had turned an angle in the road, and was within sight of the village of

Scalloway, with its dismantled keep, memorial of the oppression of evil Pate Stewart, Earl of Orkney, hanged a century before, but still (as the Tourist would tell us, were he here) the Black Beast of Orkney and Shetland.

On a fine clear summer's day the coast scenery of this part is singularly beautiful. From the heights overlooking the picturesque harbour may be traced the blue outline of many of the hundred isles forming the Shetland Archipelago, while countless holms* and islets, green with velvety sward, stud the rippling waters. Far to the westward—nearly twenty miles, I think—heaves up out of the ocean depths the mighty Fughloe, now Foula, Island—Agricola's 'Ultima Thule'—whose threatening bounds the most daring mariner approaches with reluctance.

As my uncle expected, a mist was hanging to seaward, and shut out all the nearer holms and headlands. He therefore devoted the first half-hour to a visit to the castle, being accompanied in his progress by four young ladies, carrying baskets of woollen-work—the produce of island-industry—of which, he was sternly informed, it was the custom of every traveller of distinction to purchase about a ton.

The mist had, by this time, cleared considerably. Not a sail of any kind was visible on the calm blue sea, but so many coasting and fishing craft lay at anchor in the roadstead, as to have all the appearance of a wind-bound fleet. Excepting when a small boat

* The 'holm,' at low tide, is connected with the main.

moved occasionally between ship and shore, complete inactivity appeared to prevail ; and this was the more remarkable, since the herring-season was near its close, and my uncle was aware that, on the opposite—the eastern—shore, every hour of propitious weather was being turned to the best account.

Here, however, though there were many sailors and fishermen about the beach and quay—lounging, sleeping, or chatting in groups—there was clearly neither preparation, nor thought of it. What made this state of things still more unaccountable was that the bay, even to my uncle's inexperienced eye, was absolutely alive with 'shoals' of herring and mackerel, clouds of sea-fowl pursuing them and feasting at their will.

The goodwives, if, having their work in their hands, they did not partake of their husbands' idleness, certainly abetted it, since it seemed as if four-fifths of them had assembled on the shore and the little quay.

Curious to elucidate the mystery, my uncle drew near to a man who had just come ashore from a herring-smack, and seemed to be its master, and, with some difficulty, for the sea-going Shetlanders are neither polished nor communicative, drew him into conversation.

Would it be possible, he presently asked, to visit Fughloe ; and on what terms could a smack—the skipper's, for instance—be chartered for the purpose ?

‘Fughloe!’ repeated the man, with a grin on his bronzed features, ‘why—fifty pounds.’

‘Fifty *what*?’ shouted my uncle. ‘For a four hours’ sail?’

‘You won’t get one of us for less,’ said the man, sullenly, and probably in a different dialect from that into which my uncle has rendered it. And *I* wouldn’t tempt you to try it.’

‘You have done so well with the cod and the herrings this season, that money’s no object, I suppose?’

The man’s face grew dark.

‘We have done *bad*,’ he said; ‘and we’re doing worser.’

‘With miles of fish yonder waiting to jump into your nets?’

‘Waiting to do *what*? Why, sir, *they* knows it just as well as we, perhaps better,’ was the oracular reply.

‘Know what?’

‘Eh! don’t *you* know?’ said the man, turning to my uncle; ‘so, you’re a stranger. Will you come a little way along o’ me?’ he added, in a tone meant to be civil. My uncle assented.

Passing the remaining cottages, from one of which the skipper procured his telescope, they ascended the nearest height, until they had opened a large portion of the bay towards the west. Then the man stopped, and extended his shaggy blue arm in a direction a little to the south of the now invisible Fughloe.

‘The fog’s shutting in again,’ he said; ‘but you look *there*, steady. *That’s what keeps us!*’

My uncle did look steadily along the blue arm and the brown finger, till they ended in fog and sea; but, *in* the latter—*through* the former—he fancied he could distinguish a low dark object belonging to neither, the precise nature of which was wholly indiscernible.

‘Now you’ve got him, sir,’ said the man. ‘Take the glass.’

My uncle did so; and directed a long and penetrating gaze at the mysterious object.

Twice he put down the glass, and twice—as if unsatisfied with his observation—raised it again to his eye.

‘I see the—the islet—clearer now,’ he said, at last; ‘but—but——’

‘I know what’s a-puzzling you, sir,’ said the skipper. ‘You noticed, when we was standing below, that it was two hours’ flood; and yet that little islet, as you call it, lifts higher and higher.’

‘True. It was little more than a-wash when I first made it out,’ said my uncle; ‘let me see if——’ he put the glass to his eye. ‘Why, as I live, it has heaved up thirty feet at least within this minute! Can any rock——’

‘There’s three hundred fathom, good, between *that* rock and the bottom, sir,’ said the man quietly. ‘It’s a creature!’

‘Good heavens, man!—do you mean to tell me



that object is a living thing?' exclaimed my uncle, aghast.

For answer the man pointed towards it.

His fingers trembling with excitement, my uncle could not, for a moment, adjust the glass. When he did so, a further change had taken place, and the dispersing mist afforded him, for the first time, a distinct and uninterrupted view.

At a distance from the nearest point of shore, which my uncle's professional eye estimated at a league and a half, there floated, or rather wallowed, in the sea a shapeless brownish mass, of whose dimensions it was impossible to form any conception whatever; for while at times it seemed to contract to the length of perhaps a hundred feet, with a breadth of half that measure, there were moments when—if the disturbance and displacement of the water might indicate movements of the same animal—its appalling proportions must have been measured by rods, poles, and furlongs!

Through the skipper's glass, which was an excellent one, my uncle observed that its height out of the water had diminished by nearly half; also, that clouds of sea-fowl were whirling and hovering about the weltering mass, though without, so far as he could distinguish, daring to settle upon it.

Fascinated by an object which seemed sent to rebuke his incredulity, in placing before his eyes this realization of what had been hitherto treated as fantastic dreams, my uncle continued to gaze, rooted to

the spot, until the mist, in one of its perpetual changes, shut out the object altogether, when the skipper, touching his hat, made a movement to descend.

In their way back to the village, the seaman told my uncle that, about a week before, the bay of Scalloway, and indeed all the neighbouring estuaries, had become suddenly filled with immense shoals of every description of fish, the take of herrings alone being such as to bid fair to more than compensate for the losses of the season. Three days before, while the bustle was at its height, the wind light from sou'-sou'-west, and smooth sea, a sealing-boat from Papa Stour, approaching Scalloway, had rounded Skelda Ness, and was running across the bay, when one of the crew gave notice of an extraordinary appearance, about a mile distant, on the weather bow. The next moment, a mighty globe of water, apparently many hundred yards in circuit, rose to the height of their sloop's mast, and, breaking off into huge billows, the thunder of which was heard for miles around, created a sea which, distant as was the vessel from the source of commotion, tossed her like an egg-shell.

Traditions of volcanic action are not unknown to the Shetland seamen. Imagining that a phenomenon of this kind was occurring, they at once bore up, and, having the wind free, rapidly increased their distance from the danger, while, in every direction, boats, partaking of their alarm, were seen scud-

ding into port. The appalled seamen glanced back to seaward. The momentary storm had ceased, and the spray and mist raised by the breaking water subsiding, gave to view an enormous object rising, in a somewhat irregular form, many feet above the surface, and—unless the terror of the crew led them to exaggerate—not less than half a mile in extent.

‘A rock thrown up,’ was their first idea. One look through the glass dispelled it. The object, whatever it might be, lived, moved, was rolling round—or, at all events, swinging—with a heavy lateral movement, like a vessel deeply laden, the outline changing every moment ; while, at intervals, a mountainous wave, as if created by some gigantic ‘wallow,’—would topple over the smoother sea.

Dusk was closing in when the sealing-boat reached the quay. They had been closer to the monstrous visitor than any, except one small craft—young Peter Magnus’s—which had had to stand out to sea, but was now seen approaching. When she arrived, nearly the whole population was assembled, and assailed her crew with eager question. Peter looked grave and disturbed (‘’Tis a young fellow, I’m afeerd, without much heart,’ said the skipper), and seemed by no means sorry to set foot on shore.

‘It’s neither rock, nor wreck, nor whale, nor serpent, nor anything we know of *here*,’ was all that could be got from Peter, but one of his hands, who had taken a steadier look at the creature, declared

that it made intelligent movements; also that, in rolling, it displayed its flanks, which were reddish brown, and covered with bunches as big as botheys, and things like stunted trees! Pressed as to its size, he thought it might be three-quarters to a mile round, but *there was more below!*

‘Not many of us fishermen turned in that night,’ the skipper went on to say. ‘We were up and down to the beach continually; for, the night being still, we could *hear* the beast, and from its surging, and a thundering noise that might be his blowing, we thought he might be shifting his berth. And so he was; for at daybreak he worked to the east’ard, and has lain moored ever since where you saw. But we still hear him, and the swell he makes comes right up to our boats in the harbour. Why don’t we venture out a mile or so? *This* is why. Because, if he’s a quarter so big as they say—and, sir, I’m afeerd to tell you what that *is*—supposin’ he made up his mind to go down, he’d suck down a seventy-four, if she were within a mile of him. We’re losing our bread, but we must bide his pleasure, or rather, God’s, that sent him,’ concluded the honest skipper, ‘come what will on it.’

‘There was one chance for us,’ he presently added. ‘The Sapphire, surveying ship, is expected every day, and some think the captain wouldn’t mind touching him up with his carronades; but when he sees what ’tis, I don’t think he’ll consider it his dooty!’

They had reached the village during this conversation, and were approaching a group of persons engaged apparently in some dispute, when a young man burst out from the party, and, in a discomposed manner, was walking away. The skipper stopped him.

‘Well, Peter, my lad; what’s wrong *now*?’

‘I think she’s mad!’ was Peter’s doubtful answer, as he brushed back his hair impatiently from his hot, excited brow. He had handsome but effeminate features, and seemed about twenty.

The skipper spoke a word or two with him apart, patted his shoulder, as if enforcing some advice, and rejoined my uncle.

‘Young Magnus, my sister’s son,’ he said. ‘A sweethearts’ quarrel, sir, that’s all. But she *do* try him, sure! Ah, Leasha, Leasha!’ he continued, shaking his head at a young woman who sat at work upon the gunwale of a boat and appeared the centre of an admiring circle of both sexes, who stood, sat, or sprawled about her, as their fancy prompted. She was very handsome, haughty-looking for her station, and, at this moment, out of humour.

Though she could not hear the skipper’s exclamation, she understood the gesture that accompanied it, and, smoothing her brow, appeared to stand on the defensive.

Young Magnus, who had returned to the circle, stepped forward.

‘Now, Leasha,’ he said, ‘will you dare to say before my uncle what you did to me—yes, to *me*?’

repeated the young man, striking his breast passionately.

The word was ill chosen. Leasha's spirit rose.

'Dare!' she said, in a suppressed voice. 'You shall see,' she said. 'But remember, Mr Edmonston,' addressing my uncle's companion, 'this has nothing to do with such as *you*. I said that, among Scalloway men, we had both children and cowards. I said that, because a wrecked hull, or a raft of Norway timber, or at worst a helpless dying monster of some sort is floating on our shores, we are not ashamed to skulk and starve in port. Not a boat will put out to take up the fish within half a mile of this beach—' she stamped her bare and sinewy but well-formed foot upon it—'nor even venture near enough to discover what it is that has scared away your courage and reason. Shame on all such, I say, and shame again.'

'You don't know what you are talking of, Leasha,' said Edmonston. 'We do. If there were not danger, I should not be *here*. I might be willing to risk my life, but not my ship, which, while God spares her, must be my son's and grandson's bread. You speak at random, girl, and Peter Magnus is no more to blame than the rest of us; less, perhaps,' said the good-natured skipper, 'for his boat is but a kittle thing. A "wreck," child? Who ever saw a rig with *nine masts*! "Norway rafts?" Psha! Call it a sea-thing, you're nearer to the truth; but he's a bold seaman, and a precious fool to boot, that puts his craft near enough to ask whence he hails.'

'I would do it if I were a man,' cried the girl, beating her foot upon the ground. 'And—and I will not say what I should think of the bold man that did it *now*.'

Young Magnus coloured to the temples, for the challenge was directed to him, but made no reply. There had stood, meanwhile, a little aloof from the group, a young fisherman, tall, athletic, and with a countenance that would have been handsome but for a depression of the nose, the result of an injury, and for a somewhat sullen and sinister expression which was perhaps habitual to him. The words had not left Leasha's lips before he uncoiled his arms, which had been folded on his broad chest, and strode into the circle, saying, quietly,

'I will go.'

'You'll not be such a fool, Gilbert Suncler (Sinclair),' said Edmonston.

'You'll see,' said the other, in his short, sullen manner. 'Some of you boys shove her off,' pointing to his boat, 'while I run up yonder.'

He went to a cottage close at hand, and was back almost instantly, carrying something under his fishing-cape, and a gun. His boat was already in the water, and fifty dexterous hands busied in stepping the mast, setting the sails, and stowing the shingle-ballast. She was ready.

'Who's going with you, since you *will* go?' growled Edmonston.

'I've only room for one man living,' said Sinclair,

in his sinister way. 'Now, I don't want to take advantage over Peter Magnus. Him, or none.'

The young man stood irresolute for a moment, then, with one glance at Leasha, leaped into the boat. Sinclair pushed off, eagerly.

'You have done well, girl,' said Edmonston, sternly. 'If either return alive, it will not be Peter Magnus.'

'What—what do you mean?' exclaimed the girl, clutching his sleeve as he turned away.

'That Gilbert Sinclair is a treacherous, malignant devil, and at this moment mad with jealous—— Stop——'

But Leasha had dashed down the beach.

'Peter! Peter!' she shrieked, 'come back! For the love of Heaven—back! I must speak with you!'

'*Too late!*' replied Sinclair, with a grin. 'Wait till he brings you what you want to know.'

As the last word was uttered there was a splash astern. Magnus had leaped into the water.

'Ha! ha! *Coward!*' roared Sinclair, as his boat shot into the fog.

Evening was now approaching, and my uncle, deeply interested, and resolved to see the adventure out, accepted the skipper's invitation to pass the night at his cottage. After taking some refreshment, they strolled out again upon the shore and quay. The mist was clearing, and the moon had risen. My uncle asked what his host imagined Sinclair pro-



posed to do, expressing his doubts whether he intended anything but bravado.

Edmonston was not so sure of that. Ruffian as he was, with a spice of malice that made him the terror and aversion of the village, Sinclair was a perfect dare-devil in personal courage, and, his blood being now up, he was certain, if he returned at all, to bring back tidings of some description. The man's unlucky passion for Leasha (who was betrothed, Edmonston said, to his nephew) had been the cause of much uneasiness to the friends of both. 'God pardon me if I misjudge the man,' concluded Edmonston; 'but if ever murder looked out of man's eye, it did from his when Peter jumped into his boat to-day.'

By eleven o'clock the haze had lifted so much that the skipper proposed to ascend the height, and try if anything could be seen. The night was still as death; and, as they rose the hill, the soft rippling murmur of the sea barely reached their ears.

'I never knew him so quiet as *this*,' remarked Edmonston; 'I take it, he's——'

Before he could finish, a sound, compounded of rush and roar, so fearful and appalling that it can be likened to nothing but the sudden bursting of a dam which confined a pent-up sea, swooped from seaward, and seemed to shake the very rock on which they stood. There was a bellow of cavernous thunder, which seemed to reverberate through the distant isles; and, far out, a broad white curtain appeared to

rise, blend with the dispersing fog, and move majestically towards the land.

‘It’s the surf! He has sounded,’ whispered Edmonston. ‘Listen—now!’

Perfect silence had succeeded the tumultuous roar, and again they heard nothing but the sough of the sea lapping the crags below. But, after the lapse of perhaps a minute, the hush was invaded by a soft sibilating murmur, increasing to a mighty roar; and, with a crash like thunder, a billow—fifteen feet in height—fell headlong upon the rocky shore. It was followed by two or three more, each smaller than the preceding; and once again silence resumed her sway.

At daybreak it was seen that the terrible Sentinel of Scalloway had returned to his fathomless deeps.

And where was Sinclair? He was seen no more; but, weeks afterward, a home-bound boat, passing near the spot where the monster had lain, nearly came in contact with some floating wreck. From certain singular appearances, some of which seemed to indicate that the wreck had been but recently released from the bottom, the crew were induced to take it in tow, and bring it into port. There it was at once identified as the forward portion of Gilbert Sinclair’s boat, torn—or as Scalloway men insist to this day, *bitten*—clean off, just forward of the mast; the grooves of one colossal tooth—the size of a tree—being distinctly visible!

There are persons, it is true, who have en-

deavoured to lessen the mysterious interest of my uncle's story, by suggesting a different explanation; hinting, for example, that the object might have been composed of nothing more extraordinary than the entangled hulls of two large vessels, wrecked in collision; and that Sinclair, suspecting this, and endeavouring to reduce them to manageable proportions through the agency of gunpowder, had destroyed himself with them.

But, if so, where were the portions of wreck? We have also the support of no less a person than the author of *Waverley*, who, in his notes to the *Pirate*, mentions the incident, and its effect upon the hardy seamen of Scalloway; while my uncle himself, at a subsequent visit to that port, smoked a pipe with Mr Magnus in the very boat—then converted into an harbour—that had been bitten in two by the sea-monster. So that, with him, I frankly ask—if it was not a kraken—*What was it?*





BROWN STUDIES.

LIKE will to like,' but it must have been something more than the indulgence of this propensity—an apocryphal one at best—that assembled in the little village of Brownham in the Moors, at which it was my hap to reside for two years with a private tutor, so many individuals of identical name.

My excellent tutor, to begin with, was the Reverend Philip Brown. He had married a cousin, Miss Gertrude Brown, whose band of sisters, forming a rich handful of brown-haired, brown-cheeked Browns, visited us in detachments as opportunity and accommodation permitted. The duties of the incumbency requiring assistance, Mr Brown had recently engaged a curate, and but little surprise was felt by those who knew the place when it transpired that *his* name also was Brown.


Our squire and lord of the manor headed the list, however, with what might be called a double subscription, he being the Honourable Brown Brown.

The smaller fry followed suit. The village school was under the control of a gentleman who was distinguished from his brother Browns by the surname of Cocky, or Cock-eye Brown. The clerk was Brown, and he being the sixth in lineal descent who had officiated in that capacity, the man would have been bold who attempted to divorce the office from the colour. The exciseman was Brown, 'Big' Brown. The postman Brown—'Little,' or, at times, 'Cheeky' Brown. The landlord of our little inn—the Brown Bear—was Brown. In addition to these, the village street was embrowned from end to end, insomuch that I am not romancing when I aver that there were not five shops in the place that did not exhibit the popular name, either as actual proprietor, or successor to some 'late Brown.'

To see the intercourse of this little community carried on without any apparent mistake gave me both interest and surprise. To a certain extent it was smooth sailing. One can understand the distinctions derived from commerce—Brown the baker, Brown the smith, Brown the barber, fish Brown, peddling Brown; but how about the Browns of no occupation, idle, loafing Browns, drinking, and, it was to be feared, poaching Browns, to whose proceedings the attention of our police protector, Brown, L 23, was often furtively directed? 'Thief' Brown, 'Skulker' Brown, 'Returned-convict' Brown, were prefixes which, however appropriate, might occasionally lead to a misunderstanding. Personality, as a

rule, is best avoided. How, then, to fix your man? 'Young' Brown would be simply absurd; Brown, son of the elder Brown, 'old Brown's son, you know,' would be little better, since the memory of the very oldest inhabitant (a man named Brown) recalls no period when there were not at least three generations of the same family of Browns flourishing in Brownham. Names were better arranged in the days when Higg could never have been confounded with his father Snell, or Wamba mixed up inextricably with his civic ancestor the 'alderman.'

The village, however, *did* manage to discriminate; and although the process was as mysterious as is, to the uninstructed eye, the working of a steam-engine, the result was as precise and as effectual. Some peculiar intonation, some gesture of the speaker's eye, or nose, or chin, seemed to indicate at once *which* Brown was meant; and while my reverend tutor never, by his own confession, proclaimed the banns between bachelor and spinster Browns without some misgiving as to the sufficiency of the identification, the village itself was never at fault, seldom had recourse to nicknames, except as a luxury, and separated John Brown (half wink) from John Brown (toss of the chin) and John Brown (sniff), as completely as if the most elaborate portrait had been executed of each of the three. But to be understood and at ease in this, study and experience were necessary. I shall not soon forget the pains it cost me to acquire the particular sniff that pointed



out the last-named John as the subject of conversation!

The bewilderment of strangers who found themselves splashing and struggling in this torrent of Browns, without such corks as we have mentioned, was amusing enough. The clearest intellect might have experienced some confusion. It did. During my stay at Brownham, a case was tried at the neighbouring assize town involving a disputed right of way. As frequently happens in such cases, a large body of witnesses had been summoned, and of those engaged in the cause—'Brown and Another v. Browne Browne,' it chanced that at least four-fifths belonged to our village and vicinity. Need it be added that these, almost to a man, were Browns?

It was puzzling enough for the sharp-witted counsel to keep their Browns from entangling. But the real labour devolved upon the unfortunate judge, who, in endeavouring to collate and present to the jury the whole body of evidence, was driven almost to his wits' end.

'The testimony, gentlemen,' said his Lordship, 'of that very intelligent witness, James Brown—confirmed in all its leading particulars by that of the witness Brown—I mean, James Brown—that is, the *other* James Brown—demands your most serious attention. For while, on the one hand, the respective affidavits of Peter Brown and George Brown—not to speak of the oral testimony of Stephen, Philip, and'—(consulting his notes)—'yes, and William—*Wil-*

liam, gentlemen—Brown—point to the conclusion that the connection of James Brown with the property of the Browne Browne family dates from so early a period as the decease of Peter Brown the elder: on the *other* hand, we have the combined declaration of Samuel, George, Josiah, and John Thomas Brown—fortified by that of another witness named—ah! yes!—also named Brown—that the appointment of James Brown as land steward to the Browne Browne estates, supplied John Brown, James Brown's son and agent, with all the opportunity—Peter—that is, George—of course, I mean James Brown, himself, enjoyed.

‘The evidence of the succeeding witness, Brown—Josiah—stay, gentlemen—George Brown,’ continued his Lordship, wiping his brow—‘the son, I take it, of William Brown (this similarity of surname is most embarrassing)—Brown, I say, our tenth witness and ninth of the name!—this young Brown's testimony contradicts in one material particular that of Stephen Brown. George Brown asserts—Stephen Brown as positively denies—that James Brown, Thomas Brown, and a third individual named—let me see, ha!—I should have been surprised to find it otherwise!’—(a laugh)—‘also Brown—that these three Browns, together with James Brown of Brownham—‘which,’ gentlemen?—why, gentlemen, the Brown—the—the witness—father Brown, the Brown brother—I protest, gentlemen, in all my judicial experience, I never met with so singular a case. Not

only have we to deal with the evidence of twenty-nine individuals of similar names, but my learned friends on either side have joined the conspiracy, and are, moreover, instructed by solicitors of that name; while the foreman and five other members of the jury are Browns also!'

A hearty laugh followed the judge's sally. It was silenced by the officer of the court. His name was Brown.

Tradition had it that an innocent stranger, employed in some matter of business, descended at the Brown Bear from the Brown coach, driven by old Mat Brown, and inquired for the dwelling of a Mr Brown. Forty fingers referred him to every point of the compass.

'I was told he would be known at the Bear,' faltered the traveller.

'Rather think he were,' returned a bystander. 'It's kep' by Mister Brown.'

'Not *mine*, though,' said the stranger, smiling. 'Perhaps the postmaster——'

'*His* name's Brown.'

'Or the clerk could——'

'So's hisn.'

'So's yourn,' remarked another bystander to the last speaker, apparently for the information of the traveller.

'Ain't he got some other name for to tell'n by?' asked the first speaker; 'Chucks? or Perky? Big? Booser? Cock-eye? Peddling? Thief? There's such a lot of 'em, you see.'

‘I do see,’ said the stranger, sullenly. ‘Hang the name! Well, then, *John Brown*; I don’t know that he has any other.’

‘Which on ‘em, now? there’s a tidy lot o’ Johns. What’s he like, sir?’ asked old Mat, as he prepared to remount his box.

‘Well, except that he has parchment-coloured whiskers, and——’

“Whitey” Brown, for tuppence!’ sung out old Mat. ‘Show the gen’l man his place, Bill Brown.’

Mat was right.

Brown, the clerk, was perhaps my most esteemed friend. He was a fine old patriarch, with long hair, intensely white, falling over the collar of his black coat—for, more scrupulous than any divine of my acquaintance, he never departed from the clerical sables and white tie—and, even when engaged in that livelier portion of his duties, which consisted in grave-digging, merely laid aside, for the moment, his coat and cravat. At church he was supported, on either side, by his son and grandson, both destined for the clerkly office in due succession, both copying, in the minutest particular, the style and manner of their elder, even to the adoption of those little errors and mispronunciations which had been handed down from the remotest Brown of whom any record existed. The reverend vicar, whose scholarly and sensitive ear was outraged by these ‘improvements,’ did make a faint attempt to correct



them. He might as well have striven to move the church itself. Mr Brown had bowed stiffly and respectfully, as in acquiescence, but indemnified himself, on the earliest occasion, by repeating, in a raised, instructing tone, the disputed words. To say truth, pastor Brown was a little afraid of clerk Brown, so the matter was allowed to drop. The old gentleman was a conservative to the backest bone. He was such a foe to innovation, that the changes in the book of Common Prayer, rendered necessary by those which occurred in the reigning family of this realm, always cost him a pang. Though by principle a loyal man, it was some time before Mr Brown could be got to lend a cordial assent to the accession of our present gracious sovereign in lieu of him for whom he had so long prayed, and only yielded his sanction to the birth of a Prince of Wales on its being pointed out to him that it was but reverting to a form he had used half a century since.

Dear old boy ! To the day of his death he never made up his mind how to deal with that response in the churching of women, in which, in the event of a plurality of ladies, some deviation from the printed text is unavoidable. Mr Brown effected a compromise. He altered half. 'Who putteth their trustesses in Thee,' appeared to reconcile the difficulty.

Brown, surnamed Cocky, or Cock-eye—I never ascertained which, or whether it bore reference to a peculiarity of vision, or to a certain arrogance of manner, both of which he possessed—Brown, I say,

conducted the village school. A real blessing and benefactor to the matron Browns of the vicinity, Cocky gathered up the noisier elements of the place, and, from nine to two o'clock, toiled at the education of his shock-headed pupils in a manner never before attempted. From the moment lessons began, till they ended, the school-room was in a perpetual tumult, above which Cocky's voice might be occasionally heard rising in a dissonant scream. This was only when the noise became absolutely intolerable, or when more than the average number of personal encounters, engaging themselves at the same time, threatened to attract interference from without. For, strange to say, Cocky liked the disturbance, and sent his scholars rioting up the tree of knowledge in such sort, that, could strife and clamour have done it, not a leaf would have been left unplucked upon that glorious stem. As it was, I am afraid, many got serious falls, and didn't try again.

Barrow Brown was another of my allies. In accordance with what seemed to be the prevailing custom, I had been in the habit of accosting him as 'Barrow' for some time before I made the discovery that his name was not at all 'Barrow,' but, on the contrary, Job. His history was singular—in some respects, pathetic. Job, otherwise Barrow, Brown, was the victim of an unfortunate misconception, which, in costing him his good name, supplied him with another that stuck to him for life.

Job's mission, from the cradle, was the doing

little odd jobs. Early manhood surprised him still engaged in this interesting and varied but not very lucrative employment — engaged, moreover, to a young lady whose name, for a wonder, was not Brown, and who, much to Job's discomfiture, exhibited considerable reluctance to make it so. She was the daughter of a somewhat haughty fishmonger of the next village, and was considered by her friends to have acted unadvisedly in plighting her very capricious troth to a man in Job's position. With a patience worthy of his name, the poor young fellow endured for a long period such tortures as only a spoiled village beauty can inflict, to perfection, upon her devoted Damon or Silvius. It is possible he would have brought matters to a crisis with his Adina precisely as did Nemorino—by 'listing,' in accordance with the advice of a friend, recruiting-sergeant Dick Brown—but for the solemn promise of his mistress, cemented with a broken sixpence, of which each possessed half, that nothing short of some great misconduct of his own should annul the pledge she had given him. Upon this Job lived. This, in his own words, 'kep' him straight.' For this he abjured the blandishments of the Brown Bear, was a stranger to the good dry skittle-ground, and subscribed (without any definite object, except that it looked and sounded steady) to the village burial club.

These precautions were of no avail. In a fatal hour, Job's evil genius threw in his way an odd job which involved a barrow. Little thought poor Job,

when he borrowed Stephen Brown's, and trundled merrily away, that he was wheeling his godfather ! The day was hot, the burden heavy. Job halted, for a minute, at a roadside beerhouse. He had a pot of beer—a whole pot. He had another. A friend appearing, Job generously ordered a third, whereof the pair partook, and also of two more.

The result is singular, and, for a very long period, was enveloped in an impenetrable cloud of mystery. The load, of whatever it consisted, was delivered in safety, but the barrow returned no more. Mr Brown was seen, late that evening, staggering in the direction of his home, persistently stopping every passer-by in order to secure their testimony (in case of need) that he was perfectly sober, or, as he himself expressed it, 'all right.' But he made no mention of the barrow.

The owner *did*, for the barrow was new, and, singularly enough (so, at least, it was affirmed in the village), Stephen Brown, in the visions of the night, had seen the apparition of his barrow, the wheel wanting, lifting a broken leg, as if in mute appeal for vengeance ! His worst fears were confirmed, when Job, in confusion, blurted out certain vague and utterly irreconcilable statements, and finally declared that he could remember nothing at all about it. From this position nothing could dislodge him. At length his neighbour, losing all patience, avowed his conviction that Job had either maltreated the barrow in the diabolical manner suggested in the

dream, or converted it into beer. Job indignantly repudiated both theories, but being unprepared with a better, an appeal was made to the law, when Mr Brown limited himself to the same line of defence, namely, that he could remember nothing about it.

Whether the jury—of whom several were Browns—imagined that the barrow might have risen upon Job at an unguarded moment, and, having knocked him down insensible, absconded, cannot be known. At all events, they acquitted him, and Job—henceforward Barrow, or Barrer—Brown, returned home a whitewashed man. But this process of cleaning is not always satisfactory. Whitewash *will* come off, and people who are particular eschew a too frequent and intimate acquaintance with it. So it was with poor Job. He was declared by his country, upon which he had put himself, innocent—but the barrow remained unaccounted for. A shadowy suspicion still followed, and naturally followed, the individual last seen in its company; and the surname of Barrer, which originally meant no slur, got at last to convey a hint that Job was not so stainless as the verdict of an enlightened jury had pronounced him.

Let those who delight in expatiating upon the trusting character of woman's love, blush to hear that this illiberal opinion was endorsed by Job's mistress. He was informed by her proud sire, in a letter that had a strong aroma of periwinkles, that his Dorter regarded their engagement as at an end.

From this epoch dated the decline and fall of Job.

One feeble effort he did make to preserve his steadiness, and to rehabilitate himself in public esteem. He rented a little shop—or rather shop-window—in the character of ‘Job Brown, Fruiterer and Fishmonger,’ but, the stock-in-trade being represented by three wrinkled and venerable pears in a saucer, and a small company of ‘winkles,’ not above suspicion, in a pint measure, the net profits proved insufficient. From fruit and fish to ‘creases,’ from ‘creases’ to groundsel, from groundsel to anything that could provide a meal, Job had sunk into the man I found him, when the necessity of procuring some wasp-grubs for bait led to our introduction and subsequent intimacy.

I had not known him long, when a curious event startled the whole village. The deceased barrow reappeared ! It had been discovered in the heart of a clump of juniper-bushes, and (let psychologists explain the coincidence) mutilated precisely as represented in Stephen Brown’s dream. How it got there was still a mystery, for the barrow was as inscrutable as Job, and returned to its usual habits as if nothing had occurred, frequently meeting the man it had ruined, in the public ways. On these occasions Job would glare at it as if it were a deadly enemy, and mutter between his clenched teeth phrases which it would be a mistake to describe as benevolent.

The good thoughts of the world, once forfeited, are not easily regained ; nevertheless there is, in our beloved land, a sort of ‘follow-my-leader’-ship,

especially if that leader be a person of quality, which sometimes repairs a wrong. Job's case met with much sympathy from the leading Browns of the place. It was, at least, clear that he had not stolen the barrow for the lucre of gain. Under the circumstances, it was proposed to raise a small compensatory subscription—a Brown Consolation Testimonial—by the aid of which he might recommence business on a better scale than formerly. To crown all, the haughty fishmonger, whose 'Dorter' had given him a good deal of trouble, made the most flattering advances to Job, even hinting at the possibility of a future partnership, which (it appeared) Miss Spratt was, on her part, not disinclined to make a present one.

To the unspeakable amazement of everybody, Mr Brown haughtily declined these gifts of fortune. Yes. Though, as he declared, he was so down in the world that he slep', as often as not, under a hayrick; though he had but one pair o' trowsers in the world, and they was in holes; though the werry hat he wore was took in exchange from a scarecrow, 'cos hisn (the scarecrow's) was better in the brim; still he, Job (improperly styled Barrer) Brown, would be (something through which the editor would infallibly strike his pen) —d if he would either accept alms in exchange for his good name, or marry the false-hearted jade who was prepared to wed with his prosperity, though she had jilted and deserted him in his day of trial.


The Job Browns of low life are sufficiently rare to

justify (I hope) the space I have given to the simple story of my friend 'Barrer.'

How and why it was that Browns assembled, and, to this hour, continue to assemble, at Brownham, is a study for the antiquary as well as the philosopher. The parish archives teem with Browns, even to times so remote that the registers have become undecipherable. Every such coincidence must be traceable, however, to some especial cause. There dwells on Banstead and on Leatherhead Downs a very pretty and peculiar snail, whose presence there, and nowhere else, for a long time puzzled the observant naturalist. It was, at length, revealed that, some generations since, a wealthy lady was directed by her physicians to take up her residence in those uplands, and, when the health-renewing breezes had restored to her vigour and appetite, to appease the latter by swallowing, among other things, a small esculent member of the snail family, whereof they kept her supplied in such abundance that the overplus were set at liberty to colonize the downs in the manner above mentioned.

Encouraged by this fact, I pursued my search so far as to unearth, among the parish records, the remnant of an ancient deed in sufficient preservation to indicate that a certain Dame Marjory Bevil Brown had established a 'dole,' or distribution of 'bread and flesh,' on market-days, to every applicant, of what condition soever, bearing the name of the beneficent donor.

Clanship itself has done no more.





THE SQUIRE'S TEMPER-TRAP.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

I.

THAT Taffey was a Welshman no one who had ever made an attempt to spell the locality in which he had been born and bred, would venture to deny. But we can accompany the lyrist no further. Taffey was not a 'thief.' The piece of beef which formed his Sunday dinner was not pilfered from *my* house nor anybody else's. Taffey stole nothing but the hearty goodwill and liking of everybody that knew him. He was a swarthy fellow, on working-days, as you would desire to see; but when he came out on the Sabbath, close shaven, and in a shirt as white as his own conscience, smoking a Michaelmas daisy (his wife never permitted anything of a more exciting nature until after morning service), there are, I am warranted in saying, dukes—I repeat the expression, *dukes*—who have appeared to less advantage.

Taffey was, in fact, a blacksmith. The science

of farriage (if there is no such word, there ought to be) was held to have attained its climax in the school of Taffey. Until nature should remodel hoofs, art could do no more to supply her deficiencies. His plates might be worn till nothing remained between the wearer's hoofs and the hard Welsh roads, but a wafer bright as silver, bendable into a double ring for your wife's little finger; yet they were never lost nor loosened. It was an often-quoted saying of the squire's (uttered, if you please, in a moment of enthusiasm, but never formally recanted), that if he—Theophilus Hurbandine, of Llbwyddcoed, in the shire of Flint—resided habitually in Grosvenor-square, he would, nevertheless, send down every horse in his stable to be shod, as usual, by Edward Taffey.

Taffey loved his business. Business returned his affection. That shed of his was never vacant for half an hour together.

‘Bless the brutes! Wheer they comes from *I* do’ know—nather why they comes to *me* so thick,’ would Taffey remark, sweeping the moisture from his brow with the dingy turban formed by his tucked-up sleeve. And still the stamping of impatient hoofs and switching of uneasy tails went on from morning till night; the fire never ceasing its roar, the little crowd of idlers round the half-door of the forge never diminishing, until boys stood in their fathers’ places, with their fingers, like those fathers’, in their mouths—their eyes carrying on the wink at the sparkling fount of fire, into another generation.

It will be readily believed that Taffey was a man well-to-do. Blacksmiths, when not given to drink, are almost always thriving men. So, I have observed, are millers. And whereas, nine times in ten, according to statistics about to be taken, your miller has a lovely child with blue eyes and a skin white as her father's meal-sacks, so, in this instance, our blacksmith had a blooming daughter, with a cheek as brown as, though considerably smoother than, that of her respected sire.

Katy was the prettiest girl, known of, from Llhwyddcoed to Abertlhery. Her hair was of the colour of the horse-chestnut fresh from his rough green overcoat; and, with regard to the blush with which, among many other pretty things, she returned from market excursions, on something that resembled a bale of bearskins on castors, but was popularly believed to be a pony within—as touching, I say, that blush, I can only aver that, were I a woman, I would rather wear that natural rose for six months certain, than be turned out, beautiful for ever, from the hands of the most accomplished dispenser of loveliness that ever compounded a Bond-street wash.

Next to her Hebe face, and when you had sufficiently admired her little supple figure, you would probably find yourself attracted by Katy's foot—not so much on account of the fascination of a pair of bright steel buckles, once the property of her grandmother, which it was her whim to wear, as of the symmetry of the member they adorned, and the light

decisive tread, displaying a grace no dancing-mistress could have taught. Katy was graceful from her very cradle. The honest folks about her admired before they well knew why.

As she grew up, this peculiar grace—it was almost dignity—of manner and movement procured her the title of ‘my lady’; invented, it was believed, by her father himself; and by this she was generally known, it being considered merely anticipative of what was to follow. Fairy godmothers have still adherents in Wales, and it was an article of faith with a large portion of Katy’s friends, that the benignant influence which had conferred such attractive gifts upon ‘my lady’ in infancy, would, in due course, bring forward the expectant prince, or other eminent person, destined to claim Katy for his bride.

The pew tenanted by the family of Mr Taffey being situated just within the porch of the little village church, its occupants were usually among the first who issued forth. But they were too well held and popular to be suffered to escape thus easily. Overtaken and surrounded, pleasant were the conversations that ensued around a certain stile at which Mr Taffey’s Sunday route diverged from the general way, and led across the meadows towards a little farm he rented from the squire, Mr Hurbandine aforesaid, and at which he always spent the remainder of his day of rest.

Many were the greetings from the passers-by, and none more cordial than from the squire himself,



who, walking between his handsome haughty-looking sons, suspended a rather animated conversation in which he was engaged with the elder, in order to exchange a word of kindness with his humble friend.

‘Trot up to the place to-morrow, Taffey, if you have half an hour to spare,’ he turned to add, ‘and speak to me about Ten-Tree Meadow. Never mind Hardham; you and I will settle the matter between us.’

Taffey bowed; but, though he was pleased with the squire’s affability, his countenance was somehow overcast, as he gazed after the retreating three.

The sons of Mr Hurbandine, of Llbwyddcoed, were thought to have inherited, with their mother’s patrician blood, something of her patrician pride. She was a Vere-Vavasour. To have been at once a Vere *and* a Vavasour might well have turned an ordinary brain. Something had affected the poor lady’s; and, as one of her fancies was that her veins were filled with the brightest Prussian blue, it might be fairly concluded that pride of ancestry was not devoid of blame in the matter.

Lady Geraldine was now at rest with a select and polished circle of her exalted line, who enjoyed a mausoleum all to themselves, in a picturesque corner of the ancestral domain, where a rank of stately yews and cypresses, representing the stalwart lacqueys who had once kept aloof the tide of common humanity, shut carefully out the vulgar little ivy-covered church, to which were merely intrusted the

marble virtues and granite honours of the departed V.-V.s.

The squire was a good squire; and, shunning none of those mysterious responsibilities wealth is supposed to bring, lived much among his tenantry, and made his forty thousand a year as serviceable to the interests of the land and its cultivators, as his lights permitted. Of course, he was in parliament—a back-bone conservative, and—need it be added?—voted with his diminishing party, like a man. Reports are silent as to any oratorical display. Why? He had a weakness so great as to be little short of calamity—that of giving way to gusts of sudden passion, terrible in their intensity, and rendered more grievous to witness by the disproportion to them of the exciting cause. These paroxysms were fortunately very rare, and the poor squire's subsequent remorse, not to mention the profuse liberality with which he strove to atone in some measure for the wrongs his passion had inflicted, went far towards reconciling those about him to the occasional interruption of harmony.

Lady Geraldine was the only magician who could control these paroxysms. This was not by reason of her exalted rank. The squire had no particular aversion to Vere-Vavasours, and made many of the race welcome to his halls; but he saw no more in them than ordinary (sometimes *very* ordinary) gentlemen, and treated Jack Hornidge, whose genius resided exclusively in a profound judgment of 'beasts,'

with the same distinction that was paid to the most illustrious of Lady Geraldine's lineage.

In the very height of the squire's fury, his lady had been seen to raise her thin white hand, without a word. As if stunned with the dint of some fell weapon, her husband would reel back, his hands unclenched, the fire dying out of his eyes, the fierce invective faltering into silence. None understood the spell, for even Prussian blue has its virtues, and Lady Geraldine suffered none to see that when, in lifting her hand, the bracelet slid back, it revealed a white scar. In the first passionate outburst after their marriage, Hurbandine had seized his wife's arm with such inconsiderate violence, that her bracelet, unclasping, cut into the delicate flesh, causing a painful wound and an indelible scar. *This* was the remembrance that, in moments of the most unreasoning fury, could strike down the manly squire, shocked, shamed, discomfited.

Hence was it that the Lady Geraldine, with all her pride, was a favourite with those who saw how promptly this soothing influence was exercised, at need ; and when it was the poor lady's fate to become, as we have said, insane, the loss of her benign interposition was felt by not a few. For tempers are quick, in Wales, and not even the respect due to a landlord could always overcome the resentment excited by that landlord's bearing, in his hurricanous rages.

We must hasten back to the party at the stile.

When the squire and his sons passed them, as described, the younger, Rochford, had joined in his sire's greeting, with the addition of a rather saucy smile and a glance, a trifle more prolonged than was absolutely necessary, at the blushing Katy. As to his brother, he had neither bowed nor looked, but strode haughtily forward, hardly checked by his father's momentary pause.

'Something wrong with squire again,' remarked Mr Taffey, moodily, as he turned away. 'Wants a nail, somewheer. 'Tis Mr Rochford, I'm afeerd.'

'Well, now, I don't think there's so much harm in *him*,' said Mrs Taffey, on whose frank pleasant face an expression of reproach or suspicion looked so little at home, that it was instantly detected. 'I declare to goodness, no. A nicer-mannered, freer-spoken, merrier-laughed——'

'Hallo! here's a bust of elokence!' ejaculated Mr Taffey, stopping short, the more conveniently to admire the speaker. 'Why, Maggie, you've been a-borrerin of David Apreece! You're a good creeter, and never censers anybody. Consekently, when you *has* to find fault, you doos it by praising thissen too much, and saying nuthen, or less, o' *that'n*. That's how *I* reads you,' added Mr Taffey, triumphantly, for his one vanity was a (supposed) gift of divining character. 'And who is *that'n*? Why, who could it be, but Mr Gerald? And what's *he* done, for to offend you? That's how *I* reads it,' concluded the worthy smith, with, it must be owned, less point

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than usual, his interrogative look proving that he did not read it at all.

'I never said he done anything,' replied his wife; 'I only said, Ed'ard, that a nicer-mannered, freer-spoken, merrier-l——'

'I knows wot you *said*,' retorted Mr Taffey. 'Question is, wot you *didn't* say! Freer-spoken! he's a—trot on, a little, Katy, my pet—deuced deal *too* free with some of us, specially such as weers caps and ribbings. Merry! Course he is. 'Tis a joke to *him*; that's how *I* reads it. He'd better take to another line o' business, and not be hanging s' much about the village, turning the heads—— Did you see your nice-mannered gent making eyes at—at *that'n* '—(Mr Taffey gulped something, and shot out his brawny fist in the direction of Katy's twinkling heels), 'making the lass turn as red's a peony!'

'I saw it, but I'm not afeerd,' said the mother. 'She don't like it. That's all.'

'When I was young,' observed Mr Taffey, 'when a young 'oman turned as red's a rose, she *did* like it.'

'It's not him, Mr Rochford. There!' said his wife, 'I outs with it. Why, you blessed old babby! can't you see? It's Mr Gerald!'

'Whe-ee-ew!' whistled the student of character; 'here's a kittle full! And very hockard fishes they be. Coom, how is it all, old 'oman? Queer that I, as reads things quicker than most, shouldn't have put my finger on what *you* sees! The girl's took by

that haughty, stuck-up fellow, wot despises his own father, 'cos he wasn't born a lord? Is *that* it?'

'Well, that's a little of it,' replied his wife. 'I don't think but 'tis all on his side. Why, when they passed, just now, the young squire didn't give her so much as a look!'

'*I* see. Do you think, old 'oman, nobody has eyes in their heads but *you*? He doon't care a rusty nail for her. That's how I reads it,' said Mr Taffey.

'You reads it upside down, then,' replied his helpmate; 'or p'raps you doon't read far enough. That means, he *do* like the girl; that he's afeerd of's father; that Mr Rochford knows it, and likes to let the child *see* he does. Then, they do say that Mr Rochford an't best friends with his brother. Now, *he's* the squire's favourite, and if there come any terrible to-do between the father and t'other, which's temper's as bad, one as t'other,' explained Mrs Taffey, 'Mr Rochford might come for to be squire of Llbwyddcoed; and if Katy——'

'That's like readin' to the end of the vollum, and a little furdur,' replied Mr Taffey. 'Well, well, the long and short of it's this: I 'ont have these town swells—no, narrer one of 'em, squire or lord—a-dancing 'bout our Katy. I'm going up to squire's to-morrow—you heerd'n ask me—about Ten-tree Meadow, and if I don't tell'n——'

'Never be such a noggerhead!' exclaimed his wife, in great alarm. 'Squire have been very bad lately, that's certain. Something have gone wrong,

making his furies worse than they was ever know'd to be. Nobody's sure of him, poor gentleman. One moment as smooth as—as butter, the next like a mad thing. Don't think of speaking to him—now don't ye, Edward.'

'Take the admonition, O vicine (that is, O my neighbour, whence "vicinity"),' piped a small voice at Mr Taffey's elbow. It was that of Mr David Morgan Apreece, the village schoolmaster. 'Isn't she your "placens uxor"?''

'Well, she's summot in that line o' business,' replied Mr Taffey, guardedly; 'specially when the wind's nor'-east. We was just talking of the squire. My missis have heerd he's been in his tempers, horrid.'

'Let him get another wife,' said Mr Apreece, decisively.

'A wife!'

'While my lady lived,' continued the schoolmaster, 'the squire's tantrums were few, and over directly. They never got beyond *her*. She caught 'em, like rats, or such vermin, and turned 'em out where they couldn't hurt anybody. My wife called her the squire's temper-trap.'

'I've *seen* her shut him up,' said Mr Taffey 'in less than half a jiffy! She only up with her hand. Curiosest thing I ever see! I wanted to try it on my missis, but she doon't give a man a chance.'

'Get the squire married, and all's right again,' said Mr Apreece.

'Well, I'm a-goin' up to hall to-morrow,' said Mr Taffey, 'and, if squire asks my opinion on the pint o' marriage, I'll give't him hot and strong. I can't begin the subject, 'cos it doon't belong to Ten-tree Meadow!'

'Do your best, then,' said Mr Apreece, laughing. 'Here I must leave you, neighbours.'

II.

As they neared the little farm-house, a figure that had been dimly noticed flitting—let us rather say, lurking—among the trees came to light in the stalwart person of young Thomas Fullafield. Even in his well-brushed velveteen coat, and waistcoat of a pattern so rich and varied that it might have passed for an attempt to epitomize the flora of South Wales, Thomas looked every cubic inch the lout he was. That he was in love with Katy, and had as much hope of winning her as of allying himself with the reigning house of Britain, was written legibly upon his broad face.

Sharp-sighted Mrs Taffey probably knew *that*, and, if she did not warn off the unlucky Thomas, her reasons were threefold. The matter had not been presented to her official notice. The attempt by a person of Mr Fullafield's mental calibre and general style to win such a fay as Katy, deserved all the punishment disappointment could entail. Finally,

the rumour that sturdy Thomas Fullafield, whose fistic prowess was county-wide, was keeping company (or persuading himself that he did so) with Katy Taffey, was serviceable in warning off many troublesome youths inclined to venture too dangerously near that pretty Catharine-wheel.

Thomas, however, was human. He was also practical. Unlike those troubadours who preferred obdurate mistresses—else what would become of their melodious despair?—Mr Fullafield saw no fun in unrequited passion. He had now been for nearly two years dancing—or, to speak more accurately, prowling—about Miss Taffey. Jokes, he had reason to apprehend, were being cut at his expense. Thomas had resolved to bring matters to a crisis of some sort; and, accordingly, throwing an extra amount of splendour into his attire, and of sullenness (meant for determination) into his broad visage, he marched, as we have seen, upon the foe.

At the first sight of the vanguard—Katy—Thomas was thrown into such disorder, that he fell back upon the plantation, but rallying, was the first to commence the action.

‘Mornin’, miss.’

‘Good morning, Mr Thomas,’ said Katy, showing her pearly teeth in such wise that Thomas’s teeth danced in his head. ‘You’ll dine with us? Father’s just behind.’ And she vanished into the house.

Thomas encountered the main body with his usual duck and salutation:

'Mornin', Mrs Taffey. Mornin', Mr Taffey.'

Greetings exchanged, Mrs Taffey remarked (as though his coming were a matter of course), 'You'll take a snap with us, Mr Thomas?' And, without waiting for an answer, followed her daughter.

A dreadful feeling that this one, of many 'snaps,' might be his final one in that house, kept Mr Fullafield silent for a moment, when the smith said :

'The women woon't be ready yet awhile. Coom and look at the cow-'us I've run up t'other side the slush.'

Thomas glanced at his own apparel, and thought that this agreeable excursion might have been more happily timed. There's a season for everything. Slush and a cow-house are excellent things in their way, but do not harmonize well with an exalted condition of mind; nor is their aroma, though healthy, suggestive of tender and poetic sentiment. But the opportunity was too good to be lost. The two gentlemen walked away.

Thomas's great pale-blue eyes would have opened wider still had he known that the cow-'us was a myth, and the smith no more intent than himself on soiling his Sunday boots in the locality he had described. Mr Fullafield had been the last subject of conversation between Mr and Mrs Taffey, as they concluded their walk; and the former, like Thomas, had taken a resolution. Mr Fullafield had been enough 'about the place,' and the worthy smith, who knew his daughter's feelings, and drew a wide distinction be-

tween an honest, though misplaced, affection, and a fine-gentleman caprice for a rustic beauty, resolved to warn off Thomas, for his own good, as he would have done the squire's sons, in Katy's interests.

Both strode on for a moment in silence. Then Thomas, fearing that the slush, to which they were undoubtedly approaching, might interfere with the dialogue, commenced it.

It was a peculiarity, well known to his friends, that though Thomas might have been in conversation with one of them for an hour, he always commenced any new and interesting topic with a repetition of the morning greeting; consequently,

'Mornin', feather,' said Thomas.

'Mornin', Thomas,' responded Mr Taffey; then making, so to speak, a butt at the subject, added, 'but I'm not thy feather, nor an't like to be.'

'Now, don't ye say that,' said Thomas, in a choky voice.

'I say 't, and I mean 't; and 'tis for your sake I doos say 't,' returned his companion. 'Come now, my lad, here's good two year you've been tryin' to put the shoe upon the wrong horse, and she won't have it, at no price.'

'That ben't fair, I do say,' said Thomas, warmly. 'I've called you feather, 'fore her face, and she never——'

'If you'd called me your grandmother, 'twould ha' been all the same,' replied the plain-spoken smith. 'Katy wean't ha' none o' thee.'

'If Mrs Taffey and yourself was to——'

'Stop a moment,' said Mr Taffey, halting suddenly. 'Putt the twitch on Katy, to make her marry a man she don't want? Not if I knows it. Now, lad, I doon't want to quar'l wi' thee. 'Twas natteral thou liked'st our lass—equal natteral she didn't take to *thee*; for though there be a kist o' good in thee, when one gets at it, thou'rt a bit thick in the rind. When Katy marries, 'twill be somethin' different from thee. Coom, now, you says to yourself, "Taffey's right," you says. "I'll go wheer I'll be cared about, and be looked up to, and be made much of, and have trouble took concernin'," concluded Mr Taffey, argumentatively. 'That's how *I* reads you.'

Mr Fullafield did not answer. His chin had sunk upon his breast, and his eyes were fixed upon his gorgeous waistcoat. It seemed to him that even the unconscious garment had been affected by the shock, and that the roses and sunflowers shot up a lurid, angry glow, as if they said, 'Thomas, Thomas, was it for *this* that such as we were wrought and worn?'

What other thoughts passed through his brain we (who have been singularly successful in attachments) cannot say. But when Thomas did look up, his face was such that the stout smith involuntarily recoiled, and asked him what was the matter.

'Matter! nothing,' said Thomas, with a grin.

'Nothin' don't turn a man the colour of a boiled turnip!' remarked Mr Taffey. 'Coom, my lad, take 't like a man. No need, 'cause you can't marry our

Katy, that we shouldn't be good neighbours,' said the worthy smith. 'Coom, let's trot home. I think we needn't go to the cow-'ouse?'

'I think not,' said Mr Fullafield.

'Then coom to dinner.'

'I've had dinner enow, for one day,' replied Thomas. And the expression that had shocked the smith came back into his face. Mr Taffey did not press his invitation.

At the turn, up to the farm-house, they parted.

'You'll coom up to forge to-morrow, lad, with a smile on your face, 'stead of a glower like bottled thunder; and you'll say, "All right, Taffey, *you* know'd best." That's how I reads *you*,' said the smith. 'But don't coom early. I'm going up to squire's.'

The other turned round suddenly.

'Going up to squire's! What for?'

'That's tellin',' replied Mr Taffey, jocosely, and without any real desire to make a mystery of it. 'P'r'aps about a meadow, or—or marriage,' he added, smiling, as the suggestion of the little schoolmaster occurred to him.

Young Fullafield looked at him fixedly for an instant, then, without speaking, turned and walked away.

'Going to squire's? To talk o' marriage?' he muttered. 'Whose marriage? *Her'n*? They call her "my lady," and they 'spect to make her one.

I'll spoil *that* game.' And Thomas shot back at the farm, where his lost love was innocently boiling leeks for the Sunday dinner, a glance so fiery that it might have ignited the thatch above her.

He had loved the girl, according to his nature, heartily; and love being in all essential points the same, whether it be clad in satin or in fustian, expressed in doggrel or in Idylls, Mr Fullafield's wrong would have commanded all our sympathy, but for the manner in which he took it. There is a pathos, a dignity, in the tranquil sufferer, which is wholly wanting in the man who runs a-muck.

III.

MR TAFFEY, on presenting himself, next morning, at the hall, was shown into the study. The squire had been walking up and down for some minutes. Now and then, he would pause to scowl upward at one or other of the Vere-Vavasours that adorned the wall, whose self-complacent but rather vacant faces returned the look with delightful indifference. There was another picture, a gay gallant wooing, or affecting to woo, a peasant girl, and this appeared to be a favourite of Mr Hurbandine's; for, as he gazed, the hard expression faded from his countenance, and gave way to an approving smile.

'Ten-tree Meadow is yours, from Lady-day,' he called out, the moment Mr Taffey's nose was visible



within the door. 'That's settled. Now come and look at *this*.'

Mr Taffey looked, and expressed his decided opinion that the young lady was a nice, modest-mannered young woman, sure enough, while the gentleman showed a good fall in the back, and blood (he thought) about the pasterns.

'Right, Taffey,' said the squire. 'He *had* blood, and, booby as he looks, was a gentleman, which is more,' he muttered, 'than I would say of all his kin. He lost, to Miss Sukey Bubbs, the cotter's daughter, his heart, which was supposed to be about the size of a marrow-fat pea. But it proved bigger; for he married her.'

'Good luck to 'em!' cried the honest smith as cordially as if the pair had been just starting on their wedding tour. 'They was happy, I hope, sir?'

'Merry as grasshoppers, their live-long days,' said the squire. 'They 've been dead these fifty years; but all the fun of the family died out of it with Sukey Bubbs, that is, Lady Vavasour, the cotter's daughter. They've been a dull lot since, proud as peacocks, and as worthless,' he added, sinking his voice as before. 'Our blood is *too* good, Taffey! there's the secret of it.'

'Well, I don't think but *that* perpetiwal breeding in-and-in an't no good, in the end,' remarked the smith. 'A cross that do give substance——'

'That's a nice-browed lassie of yours, Taffey,' said the squire, suddenly changing his topic.

'So I've heerd 'm say,' returned the smith, trying to look as if he hadn't quite made up his own mind on the subject.

'Blue eyes and cherry lips are rather abundant in our neighbourhood, I think,' continued Mr Hurbandine. 'My wife used to tell me the Llbwyddcoed girls were as good and modest as they were pretty.'

'They 'as good mothers,' said Mr Taffey, significantly. 'That's how I reads it.'

'Right. They cannot be too careful. Danger's everywhere,' remarked the squire. 'These young fellows, boy-guardsmen and the like, who do me the honour to come down, with my sons, to recruit their exhausted frames with wholesome food and twelve o'clock bed, won't disdain to chuck a country chin.'

'It's werry kind of 'em, I'm sure, squire!' said Mr Taffey, his eyes glistening with his own warm speech.

'Kind!'

'Seeing 'tis a game we don't play at, in these parts,' explained the smith, 'and guardsmen's heads an't quite so hard as our fistes, if they come to disagree.'

'You speak warmly. Have you anything to—to complain of, in that way?' demanded the squire.

'Yes, sir, I have,' was the frank reply. But then he hesitated.

'Out with it, man!' said Mr Hurbandine, his face assuming the expression recognized in the family, as indicative of an approaching 'squall.'

While Mr Taffey still stood, silently debating whether he would speak what was in his mind, or no, the squire pointed suddenly to a writing-table :

‘Look at those scrawls. Do you know the hand ? No,’ he continued, hastily ; and, striding across the room, he crumpled up the letters, and flung them in a heap on the fire. ‘Look you, Taffey, sundry nameless individuals, whose pothooks it has cost me an hour’s labour to decipher, accuse me of sanctioning (I presume, by my non-interference) acts of impertinence and intrusion on the part of my London guests—my sons, I take it, included—which, if persisted in, may lead to painful consequences, and, at the least, engender feelings the very reverse of those which have hitherto happily subsisted between the tenantry and the hall. This, in plain English, and with a certain regard to grammar and significance, is the purport of the letters I have destroyed. Tell me all about it.’

‘Tan’t such as I *can* tell, squire,’ replied Mr Taffey. ‘Howsoever, what I doos know I’H say. First place, I can’t make out who’s been and written them letters. There’s not many of us as doos much in that way, ’cept my wissiney.’

‘Your what ?’

‘My neighbour,’ translated Mr Taffey—‘David Apreece. It wan’t him. He an’t the man for to write anything he ’oodn’t put his name to ; and in very big letters, too, specially his capital A’s. It’s a great thing, squire, is hedication.’

Mr Hurbandine admitted that it had its advantageous side ; but, at present, willed Mr Taffey to keep to the point. Had he, or not, reason to believe that the villagers had taken offence at some indiscretion on the part of the visitors at the hall ? And what did he, Taffey, mean by saying that he himself had cause to complain ?

Thus urged, the smith blurted out the truth.

It so happened that the valley and hamlet of Llbwyddcoed were, as the squire had hinted, rather celebrated for the beauty of the rustic damseldom. Many, down to the lowest cottage class, boasted respectable descent ; and all, as is noticeable in parts of the principality, showed tokens of a haughty and independent spirit, especially towards those who used them with what they regarded as undue familiarity. The manly squire approved and fostered this feeling ; and nothing was more calculated to evoke his anger than any complaint like those addressed to him by his anonymous correspondents. We cannot be surprised that Mr Taffey, aware of this, confessed, with a reluctance and embarrassment unusual with him, that there *was* something in the alleged grievance that needed to be put to rights. Gentlemen of polished aspect, with whiskers of paly gold, shooting-coats of fashionable design, and highly condescending manners, had discovered picturesque beauties in the little hamlet, which had escaped less observant visitors. A lounge and a smoke in the immediate purlieus of Llbwyddcoed had grown to be an apparent

necessity with the squire's male guests. Familiarity with danger leads to contempt of it. Despite their habitual reserve and self-respect, the rustic belles soon began to notice, without alarm, the Honourable Tom Castleton's singular predilection for hollyhocks, and receive, without resentment, my young Lord Leatherhead's humble request for information respecting the manufacture of goats'-milk cheese. What harm could there possibly be in youths who, even in depraved London, could maintain a pure and healthy affection for hollyhocks and cheese? We need not follow up the story pace by pace. The curly whisker and the flattering tongue carried the day—until, on the part of fathers, brothers, and sweethearts, jealousy and distrust succeeded to gratified pride. There had been one or two serious disturbances; and it was understood, in the village, that, among other individuals 'cautioned,' my Lord Leatherhead had been openly requested to complete his dairy education elsewhere; whilst the Honourable Tom Castleton was in the receipt of almost daily invitations of a pugilistic character, which it had become exceedingly difficult to decline.

Such was the substance of Mr Taffey's representations, which could scarcely have been given in his own words, without retarding the narrative. As he spoke, the gloom deepened on his hearer's face, and a lurid gleam, as the squire raised his eyes for an instant and dropped them again, showed that a storm-burst was at hand. He was striving against his own rising passion.

'You—you spoke of yourself, Taffey,' he said, in a stifled voice. 'Let me understand that none of these lispng jack-puddings have insulted *her*—your pretty Katy, I mean?'

The smith's forehead flushed. He hesitated.

'Speak out, man!' said the squire. (An idea seemed to flash upon him.) 'My sons! Do they—does either of them—dare—? I see it *is* so. *Which?*' he thundered, starting from his chair.

His imperious tone roused the spirit of the sturdy smith.

'Mr Rochford, then,' he shouted, in a voice as loud as the squire's, 'since you *must* have it, he's dawdling and dodging about our place, more than I and my missis like—or the girl, either, for that matter. I was thinking of speaking to one or t'other of you; and now you've heerd it, why take notice on it.'

And Mr Taffey caught up his hat from the ground.

Nothing checks a man's passion more effectually than the unexpectedly finding his interlocutor in a greater passion still.

The squire grew pale and quiet, and re-seated himself in his chair.

'Leave me now, my man. Go, my old friend,' he continued, quickly. 'I will see to this matter. There shall be no more cause of complaint. I have known your pretty Katy as the best-behaved, as she is the prettiest, girl in all the county. She and I have

been friends from her cradle. Sukey Bubbs—Lady Vavasour, I mean—must have been Katy herself at fifteen. No fopling that bears my name, and is ashamed of it, shall turn *her* pretty head, and torment her innocent heart, for the amusement of an idle hour! Leave it to me.'

'Twas as precious near a blow up between us as ever I see,' thought Mr Taffey, as he walked home; 'but I've shod'n nicely all round, and he'll do for a while. Squire's not so wicious, and tenderer in the mouth than he was—leastwise, with a good hand upon him. Hallo! School up already, wissiney?' he added, as the little schoolmaster skipped across the road and joined him.

'We begin betimes, you see,' said Mr Apreece. "Diluculo surgere," you know.'

'No great luck in going to a surgery, I should think,' remarked Mr Taffey.

'You've arranged that matter with the squire?' inquired the schoolmaster, with a smile.

'What matter, wissiney?'

'About his marrying again, you know.'

'We was talkin' of summot else,' replied Mr Taffey, 'but, now you speak of it——'

He stood still suddenly, and looked in the other's face with a curious expression.

'Now I speak of it——' prompted Mr Apreece.

'I've seen onlikelier things come to pass,' said the smith. And they parted.

IV.

'You wished to see me, sir,' said Mr Rochford Hurbandine, sauntering into his father's study, and flipping off the lighted end of his cheroot as soon as he was within the door.

'I beg, sir, you will not deny yourself a moment's sensual gratification on *my* account,' said the squire, politely. 'Permit me to offer you a light.'

'Thanks. I've done for the present,' replied Mr Rochford. 'Castleton and I are going for a trot in the village, and, not to be vulgar, go in for the universal cla-ay.'

'If Mr Castleton and yourself would infuse a little variety into your afternoon excursions,' said the squire, with the same suavity as before, 'it would, I think, afford increased gratification to all parties concerned. With beautiful rides in all directions—'

'We prefer the life of the village,' said Mr Rochford, calmly.

'The livers, sir, are surely beneath the notice of gentlemen of such lofty fashion,' remarked Mr Hurbandine, with some asperity.

"The proper study of mankind is man,"' said his son.

'And, therefore, not exclusively *woman*, sir,' retorted the squire. 'If your visits had reference to our general improvement—the advancement of cottage architecture, the progress of my village

schools—I should have nothing but thanks to offer. As it is, I fear that the introduction of the Mayfair element into Llbwyddcoed will resemble that chemical combination which results in a report and a conflagration.'

'The young ladies in whose birth, parentage, and general training you are so philanthropically interested, seemed gratified with our respectful homage.'

'I have no doubt of it,' returned his father. 'They don't see such a brace of finished puppies every day. Did it strike you, however, that their tolerance of your "homage," as you call it, might have been partly owing to their respect for *me*?''

'It assuredly did not, sir,' said Mr Rochford, frankly.

'You now comprehend my wishes, sir,' said the squire, growing angry. 'Your proceedings elsewhere I cannot control. Here, at least, I will be master.'

Mr Rochford coughed.

'What do you mean, sir?' asked his father, sternly.

Mr Rochford opened his great blue languid eyes to their utmost extent, and looked at his father for a moment, as if striving to comprehend him past any mistake. Then he burst into a low well-bred laugh. 'I mean, my dear father, that we could not, in any case, espouse the entire village; nor have I, believe me, the slightest intention of presenting another Sukey Bubbs for your paternal benediction.'

'No, sir, I suspect you of no such sensible pur-

pose,' replied the squire, his face darkening. 'But may I ask how the Lady Susan Vavasour has merited this polite tribute to her memory?'

'Simply by being born Bubbs,' said Mr Rochford. 'A family misfortune, sir—no more.'

'You forget, perhaps, that your great-grandfather was a small farmer?' said Mr Hurbandine.

'One of them was,' replied his son. 'His maternal colleague was a peer. Speed the plough, sir, as much as you please, but don't run it over my mother's ancestors.'

The incautious words had barely left his lips when the squire, his eyes blazing with rage, sprang from his chair and confronted him so closely, that for an instant the young man apprehended violence.

'Insult me to my face, you puppy! you cold-blooded offshoot of a race of effete boobies, with not so much red blood in their whole line as would paint an ace of hearts!' thundered the angry squire. 'Leave the room, sir! Begone! And mark this,' he added, sinking his voice to a lower but not less furious tone; 'see that I do not give you a second Sukey Bubbs for your *mother*.'

'What say you to a stretch across the hills, Tom?' said young Hurbandine to Mr Castleton, who was playing at croquet by himself on the lawn.

'In a balloon?' inquired his friend, shading his eyes, and pretending to survey the heights in question with great alarm.



'They have been pronounced accessible,' said Rochford. 'At least, my aunt, Lady Clamborough, scaled one of the loftier peaks last year in her Bath chair, attended only by her fat lap-dog and one devoted page, and actually returned to dinner! But she was a remarkably plucky person at eighty; and if you really think——'

'Say no more. I share the peril and the glory,' said Mr Castleton, flinging away his mallet.

'Still, if you have anything to do in the village——'

'But I haven't. On my *word*, now, I haven't,' said the Honourable Tom, promptly. 'To-day I'm in a mountain mood. Away!'

That Mr Castleton's mood inclined to the mountain rather than the plain might have been partly due to the fact that he had in his pocket at that moment a letter, conveying in distinct, not to say emphatic, terms an invitation to a fistic encounter with a gentleman named Cornelius Podgerbot, whose feelings had been outraged by his—the Honourable Tom's—bearing in reference to one 'Ally Davis of the mill.' For, though far from being deficient in courage, Mr Castleton's soul revolted at the idea of actual personal conflict, and the prospect of a possible defeat at the hands of the burly clown was intolerable.

Lighting their pipes at the lodge, and sending back word from thence that they might not return to dinner, the two gentlemen accordingly set forth.

It was late when they returned, for the ascent

had proved practicable, and there was even a very comfortable inn—the Welsh Harp—at the top, at which the enterprising travellers obtained a dinner that would not have discredited Francatelli, accompanied by an appetite that not even *he* could provide. It was still daylight, however, when, on nearing the lodge, they met Gerald Hurbandine striding hastily along.

‘Anxious about us?’ asked Mr Castleton, with feeling. ‘Really, my dear Hurbandine, this is too—too much.’ (He wiped his eyes with the cuff of his coat.) ‘“Touching anecdote of an elder brother!”’

Gerald laughed, but seemed disposed to continue his way.

‘I shall be back in half an hour,’ said he.

His brother took him aside.

‘Is all right? Where’s the governor?’

‘About the grounds, I think. *Why?*’ asked Gerald.

‘Sweet?’

‘As sugar. Again, why?’

‘He does not suspect *you*. Gerald, I know where you are going. Take my advice,’ said the young man, earnestly—‘don’t.’

‘I must and will,’ replied Gerald, his forehead flushing. ‘She is alone to-night—alone at the farm. I have not had such a chance these six months.’

‘Rude to whisper in company,’ said Mr Castleton. ‘I think I shall leave you. I also think I felt a drop alight on my nose.’


'It *does* rain,' said Rochford. 'Come, Gerald. Well, if you *will*,' he added, as the other turned away, 'take my overcoat. I don't like the sky.' And he flung him that garment (of a light fawn-colour), which he was carrying on his arm.

'Thanks, old fellow.' And Gerald, throwing it over his shoulders, hastened away.

V.

It was a fact, howsoever Gerald arrived at the knowledge of it, that 'my lady' Katy was alone that evening at the little farm-house, the usual week-day garrison, an old woman and two stout boys, having gone to a neighbouring fair. But they would, of course, return before night, when Katy would, in all probability, trip across the fields to the town mansion in Llbwyddcoed.

As young Hurbandine hurried along, he debated whether he would abide this chance or boldly attack the cottage. In the former case, Katy might not be alone; in the latter, she certainly would be; and that which Gerald had resolved upon demanded both time and secrecy. A side door, standing ajar, decided him; but, though conscious of an ally within, a whisper in Katy's heart that stood his friend, a tremor unusual with him—arising, perhaps, from the consciousness of taking an unfair advantage—checked him, as he raised his hand to knock. After a mo-



ment's irresolution, he pushed the door a little wider open. Katy was before him.

Her back was towards the door, and, intent on her occupation, she was as yet unconscious of any beholder. The queen of beauty of Llbwyddcoed was not attired in satin and gold. She was neither working tapestry nor playing the lute. Her dress was a very full, short petticoat of some grey stuff, disclosing, as the wearer bent over her work, a beauty and amount of limb rarely vouchsafed to the gaze of mortal man; for Katy's heart was not purer than her taste, and, fair as she seemed, her ordinary attire rather disguised than augmented her loveliness. She had thrown off, for the moment's exigence, her upper dress, and pearly shoulders and rounded arms were having it all their own way, in a manner so entrancing that it was no wonder Gerald stood rooted to the ground, like the bold hunter who surprised Diana.

The bewitching creature was doing something with a tub, but whether with milk or meal—inasmuch as her arms emerged from the white contents hardly whiter than before—it would have been impossible to say.

‘Katy!’

The girl sprang round, as if a shot had struck her. The next instant the colour rushed into her face. She snatched her scarlet cloak from a clothes-horse that stood near, and wrapping it hastily round her neck and bosom, confronted her visitor with



an air that had in it certainly more of anger than of love.

'It seems you knew that I was left *alone*,' she said, in a voice of unmistakable resentment.

Gerald pointed to the open door.

'That is part of my excuse. For the rest, time is precious. I have that to say——'

'You will leave the house, without another word,' said Katy. '*Then*, I am not sure that I should be justified in listening to your excuses—even from the upper window.'

'Consider my excuses made,' said the young man; 'and, for pity's sake, hear——'

'Not where you stand,' returned the imperious young lady, as, with an air a duchess might have envied, she pointed to the door.

Policy, as well as good taste, suggested obedience, and Gerald, retreating, closed the door, and walked round the angle of the cottage into the little garden. As if to reward this docility, Katy presently opened the lower window—almost within arm's length. The brief interval had sufficed her nimble fingers to arrange her dress in its usual form, and when Katy appeared in the window, her face was calm and rather pale. There was, moreover, a look of resolution in the lucid blue eyes she bent upon her lover, which he did not at first understand.

'My lady,' however, partook her father's taste for coming to the point; and, taking advantage of Gerald's momentary perplexity, did so now.

'You did wrong in coming hither, Mr Hurbandine,' she began.

'My name is Gerald, Katy,' put in Gerald, softly.

'And mine Taffey,' said Katy. 'It is no matter. You did wrong, as I said, in coming—but, strange to say, I wished to see you, and——'

'Strange!'

'Your imprudence and selfishness have done me harm—much harm and wrong,' continued the girl, her tears rising. 'I have warned—reproached—entreated, in vain. Now, I have to tell you, you will never——'

'Stop. Will you not listen?' pleaded Gerald.

'Certainly, if *you* will,' said Katy, with a sad little smile. '*My* speech first—it may shorten the discussion. My mother has spoken to me, and does not, I am afraid, quite believe that I have done all in my power to check this—what shall I call it?—this habit, this fancy of yours, for singling me out, among the other village girls, for the high favour of your notice.'

'Not so, Katy. I have ever been most guarded——'

'In the presence of your father. Yes,' said Katy. 'To do you justice, nothing, on those occasions, could be stonier—more becoming, that is, than your demeanour. Your brother is more daring. He smiles!'

'He did so for my sake—and yours,' added Gerald, hastily.

'To distract papa's attention from the really

naughty boy,' said Katy, with a curl of the 'lip, which, nevertheless, quivered in the act. 'It is very kind of Mr Rochford. Indeed, you are both very kind—very thoughtful—for yourselves. On *my* account, at least, Mr Hurbandine, you shall have no more trouble. Let this little amusement end. It has served its turn, and London must be pining for your reappearance. Henceforth, I am the blacksmith's daughter; you the squire's son. And if I am entitled to any wages for my part in the pretty little play, let it be *this*'—and the girl drew herself up with unconscious dignity—'that neither yourself nor your brother presume to address me again. Do not, Mr Hurbandine, do me the wrong of believing this coquetry or caprice. These arts are for high-bred ladies in London. Here we show what we feel, and mean what we say. Our acquaintance is ended. Now—— Who is that?' she added, with a look of unmistakable alarm.

'Who? What? Where?' exclaimed Gerald.

'I thought some one stood in the shrubbery-path, and moved away when I cried out!' said Katy: 'I—I am not quite myself. Perhaps it was my fancy,' she added. 'Now, go.'

'Now for my speech,' was Gerald's reply, as he moved a step nearer to the window. 'I, too, have made my resolutions. I have been dreaming, but I awoke to-day; and to what conviction, what reality? Even this, my darling—that the whole tribe of Veres and Vavasours, from the remotest patriarch down to

my humble self, are not to be weighed against one blacksmith's daughter, nay, not against her smallest finger or one lock of her silken hair!' He stopped for an instant. 'Katy, will you marry me? Love, will you be my *wife*?'

The girl, white with emotion, pressed her hands to her bosom.

'Mr Gerald!' she gasped.

'Say Gerald, and I am answered,' pleaded the lover.

'But—your father——?'

'Leave that to me. All will be well. Speak, dear—your answer?'

'You are foolish, and I am wrong,' said Katy, after a moment's struggle; 'but—but—I love you, dear,' and she burst into a passion of tears.

VI.

It was a few minutes before the satisfactory termination of the quarrel just described, that the worthy squire, while pausing, in his evening stroll, to prune a tree, was, to his great astonishment, cannoned against by a young man, who, with his dress disordered, and a face inflamed with heat and passion, came dashing through the trees, as if regardless of all obstructions.

'Hallo, Tom Fullafeld! what game's this?' shouted the squire, recovering his equilibrium.

'It's a providence — squire — findin' you here,' gasped the young farmer. 'Go you on to the corner, *that'n* leadin' to Taffey's farm—and—and you'll see.'

'See! See what, man? Rick on fire?'

'Worse, you'll say,' returned young Fullafield, with a sullen fierceness that provoked the impatient squire into grasping him by the collar.

'What d'ye mean, you blockhead?' he thundered. 'Have you lost both brains and tongue?'

'There's your son a-kissin' Taffey's daughter, that's all,' returned Thomas, choking with excitement and insensate rage.

'My son? Which?'

'Mr Rochford—curse him!' added Tom, in a lower voice.

The squire's eye flashed, but he displayed no outward anger.

'Get home, Fullafield,' he said; 'compose yourself, and say nothing.'

He turned and strode away.

'The boy defies me, then? He shall repent it! Ay, to the next generation!' he muttered, furiously.

At the turn of the road, the little farm-house, indeed, came into view. It was now dark, but forms were clearly distinguishable, and it so chanced that, at the moment the squire obtained a view of what was going forward, Gerald was being permitted to take (through the window) a parting embrace of her whom he now regarded as his affianced wife. The brothers were much alike in build and stature. The

squire's eye caught the familiar light-brown overcoat usually worn by Rochford, and not a doubt that it was his younger son ever entered his mind. He ground his teeth together, and his face grew white, as he vowed in his mind to execute a certain resolution to which he had been striving to come. He turned, and hurried homeward.

Suddenly, a suspicion occurred to him.

'Can the boy be in earnest? Is it possible that, in spite of his disdainful denial, he is willing to make that pretty girl his wife? I will test him, at least,' thought the squire. 'Youth is changeable. Yes, that's but fair.'

Rochford, on returning, as he said, from the stables, was informed that he was again required in the library.

'Rochford,' said the squire, 'I spoke hotly to you this morning, but I think you will acknowledge that I have not been, on the whole, an arbitrary, tyrannical, or even an irritable parent.'

His son—not without a shade of compunction for his own shortcomings—admitted that such was the fact.

'You will have less hesitation, then,' resumed the squire, 'in owning the exact truth, although it may not be in strict accordance with what you have already given me to understand.'

'As yet, I do not comprehend your meaning, sir,' said Rochford.

'You told me, this morning, that nothing should



induce you to present "another Sukey Bubbs" for my paternal blessing. By that sarcasm you meant, I presume, that you would not condescend to marry beneath your station ?'

'You are right, sir. That was my meaning,' replied the young man, steadily.

'Take care, Rochford ; you cannot have forgotten our conversation of the morning, nor my strongly expressed desire that you should henceforth refrain from your harmful intercourse with my cottage tenantry. Now, take care,' said the squire, biting his lip ominously.

'I have neither forgotten your commands nor the emphasis with which they were delivered,' replied his son, whose inclination to retort too frequently overcame him.

'Then what do you mean by your conduct since ?' thundered the squire.

'Since when ? Restrain yourself, sir, if you *can*,' said the young man, haughtily ; 'and suffer me to understand of what I am accused. I have done nothing contrary to your commands.'

'That is a falsehood, sir !'

Rochford started to his feet.

'A falsehood !'

'Am I not to believe my own eyes and ears ?' shouted the squire, his passion increasing every moment. 'You have disobeyed me. Now you would deceive me. Is *this* the honour of the Veres and Vavasours, of which you are so tender ? There is

not a lout on my land that does not better understand the word. You shall repent this. Yes, before you are a day older, you shall bitterly regret your defiance of me. Have you anything to say?' he added, as his son turned to leave the room.

'Not one word, sir,' said the young man, proudly. And the squire was alone.

The morning that succeeded this interview was bright and fresh, tempting more than one habitually early bird to be astir earlier still. Among these were Messrs Taffey and Apreece, who lingered for a moment at the forge-door, in conversation.

'That's most as passed,' Mr Taffey was remarking; 'and I'm glad it wan't more. He's a good heart, and a wile temper—that's how *I* reads him. And if he'd make up his mind for to marry any one as 'ood *ketch* that wile temper, an' let it fly out o' the winder, as my lady did as is gone, there'd be no better man. Hullo! Talk of the — — Hem! here's the squire himself.'

It was, indeed, Mr Hurbandine who came trotting briskly down the street, and reined up at the forge.

'A word with you alone, Taffey.'

The smith beckoned one of his swarthy followers to take the squire's horse, and they walked a little apart.

'Taffey,' said Mr Hurbandine, laying his hand on the smith's sleeve, 'I have made up my mind to marry again.'

The honest smith could not forbear a start, so aptly did the remark succeed to his late conversation



with Apreece. But why come to *him*? Did the squire think that he could forge him a wife to order? His doubts were instantly resolved.

'You have a daughter, my old friend,' continued the squire, 'fair, modest, sweet, intelligent. She is worthy of any station. *She* is seventeen; *I* am forty-seven. If she were willing to sacrifice her bright youth, to partake the lot of such a patriarch as I must appear to her, give her me to wife. Be sure that I will deal with your precious flower as tenderly, with affection as observant and as confiding, as any lowlier lover whom I may have baulked of the prize. What say you?'

Mr Taffey was far too much bewildered to say anything. He could only stare at the eager speaker, shift from one leg to the other, take off his cap and put it on again, and wish for his wife.

As if the squire had divined this thought, he proposed an instant reference to that lady. To the cottage they went. Fate willed that Mrs Taffey should be 'out and about.' So vague an indication of her whereabouts was too much for the impatient squire, and, Katy being in her apartment, Mr Taffey was prevailed on, much against his inclination, to undertake the office of plenipotentiary, and lay before his daughter the singular proposal, in which he himself could hardly yet believe.

'They did say as she should marry a lord,' thought Mr Taffey, as he went out, scratching his head; 'and a squire's next door to'n.'

He was absent so long that the squire, finding the suspense intolerable, was about to disturb the conference, when the ambassador returned, somewhat flushed and out of sorts.

'She won't ha' nothing to say to't till she have seen *you*, squire,' was the announcement.

'Devilish right of her,' said the honest squire; 'I like her the better for it.'

'She've something on her mind, which you won't like so well, I do fear,' remarked Mr Taffey, doubtfully. 'Here she is.'

Katy entered, as he spoke, deadly pale, eyes a little red. She wore the dress of homely gray, in which she was wont to go about her cottage work; but the richest, the most studied attire could have added nothing to the grace and dignity of the girl's manner as she curtseyed, with a sort of lofty respect, to the Lord of Llbwyddcoed. The latter, on his part, thought that he had never seen her to such advantage; for, in addition to the beauty with which he was familiar, there was in her countenance an expression of intense feeling that gave to every lineament life and speech.

'Katy——' began the squire. But she stopped him.

'Please, Mr Hurbandine, before you say one word more, permit me to ask a question.'

'Twenty, my dear,' said the squire.

'Did you see your son last night?'

'I did.'

‘Did you speak of—of *me*?’

‘Of nothing else,’ replied the squire.

‘I must have misunderstood my father, then,’ said Katy, the colour rising in her cheeks.

‘And why so, my dear child?’ asked the puzzled squire.

‘Because,’ returned Katy, fixing her clear eyes steadily on him—‘because your son, if he told you *anything*, must have told you that *he* had asked me to become his wife, and that I had consented.’

‘Merciful Heaven, child! what are you saying?’ ejaculated Mr Hurbandine, in his turn growing pale. ‘My son asked you to be his *wife*?’

Katy mistook his meaning.

‘If you have not combined to insult me,’ she said, haughtily, ‘and if I understood your message, it was an honour his father did not disdain.’

‘*My* proposal was in earnest, my poor child,’ said the squire, divided between anger and sorrow.

‘And *his*?’ half whispered the girl.

‘A lie!’ shouted the squire. ‘A villanous deceit! —the common pretext of a libertine, whose other arts have failed. Alas! that I should live to say it of my son! Child, child! He had no thought of marriage. I gave him the opportunity of breaking it to me. I spoke with leniency—nay, with approbation—of a similar union once contracted in my family. He sneered it down. No, he is a rascal—the first, thank Heaven, in my line. There is no taint upon the honour of *my* ancestors; and the Veres and Vavasours,

if boobies, are not blackguards. Forget him, my poor Katy.'

The cottage-girl took him up unexpectedly. Making one step towards him, she looked him once more steadily in the face.

'Your son informed you, last night, that he had no intention of making me his wife?'

'He distinctly repeated a declaration he had made to me in the morning, that nothing should induce him to marry beneath his station—my consent (I conclude) notwithstanding.'

'Fresh from my presence!' murmured Katy.

'Even so,' said the squire, sadly.

'Mr Hurbandine,' resumed the girl, raising her eyes suddenly, with a light in them he had not seen before, 'if I could believe this insult possible——'

'Katy! you doubt my word! But go on. *If*——'

'I would say, do with me as you please,' said Katy, turning her crimson face from the squire to her father, which latter gentleman had been a silent, not to say bewildered, spectator of this scene.

'What further proof do you require, Katy?' inquired Mr Hurbandine. 'Would you hear from his own lips the confirmation of what I have told you?'

'Then, indeed, I could not doubt,' said Katy. 'But, oh! sir, if you had heard him!' The proud head drooped forward, to conceal the tear that would not be denied.

'Then, so you shall!' exclaimed the squire. 'But,


see, Katy. In your father's presence, I hold you to your pledge. If my son rejects the treasure of your wifely love, it is mine, mine!—and he that dared insult your innocence with his profligate vows shall see you seated where his mother sat, the mistress of Llbwyddcoed. Taffey, my good friend, you are witness of our compact. This very morning must decide all. Explain everything to your good wife; bid her soothe and guard my precious Kate, and come up with her—you also, my old friend—to the hall about noon. Leave the rest to me.'

He was gone.

VII.

THE noonday sun was casting rich gleams through the stained-glass windows of the squire's library, and directing a particularly bright one upon the face of Lady Susan Vavasour (born Bubbs), at whom Mr Hurbandine stood gazing with an interest even more than common.

'I hate eavesdropping,' said the squire, leaving the picture, and beginning to pace the room. 'It's a shabby thing at best; but in this case—at least, in my humble judgment—'tis the best and shortest way. Half-a-dozen words, and there an end! Whereas we may go on fending and fencing, and proving and doubting, for a week without it. Yes, better so,' concluded the honest squire, as, with a slightly height-



ened colour, he took a large light screen that leaned against the wall, and, opening it, drew it across the room in such a manner as to conceal a door that opened upon a side-staircase.

At that door he listened for a moment.

‘They are coming!’

The next moment Mr and Mrs Taffey, with Katy, made their appearance under the guidance of a trusty old servant of the squire’s, who withdrew.

The two elder visitors spoke in whispers, and walked on tiptoe, like a pair of respectable married burglars. Mr Taffey had with difficulty been prevailed upon not to leave his boots at the foot of the stairs. Katy followed, with a face and air outwardly calm and composed enough, but a deadly pallor succeeded to the blush with which she had acknowledged the squire’s greeting, and she found herself compelled to accept one of the chairs he had hastily placed for her mother and herself. There she forced herself to sit, with a cold judicial air, waiting for her doom.

The squire had hardly seated himself in his accustomed place, when Rochford, summoned by the old servant, made his appearance.

‘Sit down, Rochford,’ said his father, in a conciliatory tone. ‘Our last two interviews have not had results as satisfactory as I could desire.’

‘The third time is proverbially lucky, sir,’ said the young man, smiling. ‘I am here to know your pleasure.’

'My pleasure is your happiness,' returned the squire. 'Make me your friend, Roch. Have no mental reservation with me in regard to what I am about to say. Will you promise?'

'I do, sir,' said the young man, after a moment's pause.

'Enough. What are your feelings—what your object—with respect to Katy Taffey?'

There was a slight movement behind the screen, but neither gentleman observed it.

Rochford had hesitated for an instant, then he said: 'Will you, in your turn, promise me, my dear father, if my answer does not please you, to restrain your anger?'

'I will, Roch. On my honour, by your mother's memory,' said the squire with feeling, 'I will.'

'Then, sir,' said Rochford, rising, 'I repeat my twice-made declaration. I do not love the girl; and, if I did, such are the prejudices I was born with, that I would not marry her.'

'You are a greater scoundrel than I took you for!' said the squire, in a distinct but perfectly controlled voice. 'No heroics, if you please,' he added; for Rochford had sprung from his chair, as if his father had dealt him a blow. 'Leave me, and blame yourself for what may follow.'

Rochford looked silently at his father, and quitted the room.

The squire flung the screen aside.

But the girl, with a gesture almost of alarm,

motioned him from her. She strove to utter some words, but failed, and fell helplessly into her mother's arms.

'What — what is this? Is she not content yet?' asked the perplexed squire. 'Can tongue speak plainer? Tell me, Taffey, what can I do more?'

The smith passed his hand through his iron-gray locks.

'Well, squire—begging pardon,' he said—'you knows I'm a houtspoken man, and since you puts it to us wot you mought do, my missis thinks, and so do I, and we've been all a-thinking—on'y we didn't like for to be troublesome—that you'd better try the screen again, and just see what t'other'll say!'

'T'other!' ejaculated the squire.

There was no time for further explanation, nor any need to replace the screen. Gerald, resolved to confess all to his father, entered the study at that moment for that very purpose.

Words were superfluous *then*. The eyes, the cheeks, of the young lovers told everything—everything that was essential to the squire's enlightenment. It was left for after-explanation how the incidental borrowing of a light-brown paletôt, by a gentleman who generally sported a dark one, had led to such serious complications and important discoveries.

The squire, frank and generous as he was quick and impulsive, accepted a solution far more apt and

seemly than that he had, for a brief space, had in contemplation, and heartily lent himself to the fulfilment of his own prophecy. There *was* a marriage at Llbwyddcoed; and, if it was not a merry one, we, who were among the bidden, know not what mirth means. Patrician and plebeian guests united on this occasion in such harmony, and with such a community of good breeding, that it was almost impossible to say which was which. It was, however, noticeable that neither my Lord Leatherhead nor the Honourable Mr Castleton was present.

Mr Rochford, though gay and condescending at the festivity, had not, at that period, wholly forgiven his brother's choice. It was remarked that he never again wore that fawn-coloured paletôt which had indirectly contributed to the wooing of Katy, and shortly after presented it to his valet. It is to be presumed, however, that he has got over the prejudices he was 'born with,' being now engaged to a very amiable girl, the only daughter and heiress of David Black Dymond, Esq., the well-known millionaire, who commenced his useful and prosperous career as a common miner at half-a-crown a day.

Some words caught our ear, as we wandered through the marriage throng, spoken by two gentlemen in very holiday garments, who were half concealed by a column in the hall. They were Mr Apreece and Mr Taffey.

'Nunc est bibendum,' remarked the former, and there was a clinking of glasses, as in good fellowship.

'Worry much so,' returned Mr Taffey, 'if by bend 'em means "be civil." If all great folks, like squire, would bend 'em a little more, 'twould be better going for all.'





MELUSINA.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

I.

NO portion of that widely-scattered empire of which little England fulfils the functions of heart and brain, is richer in nature's gifts than that which, not many years ago, was the scene of an actual life-drama as extraordinary as ever put romance to shame.

Severed by many a league of glistening sea from the maternal bosom, this singular spot suggests the image of a beautiful wilful child, who, thrust in sudden anger from its natural home, and finding a place under alien skies, surrounds itself with conditions and characteristics that have little in common with its former life, without losing the energy and independent spirit which were its true inheritance.

Golden Isle—I cannot give it its legitimate name—possesses a climate and seasons, habits, laws, and language of its own. Somewhat difficult and dangerous of access, it has less intercommunication with

the general family of mankind than any civilized spot upon the map of earth. Bold sea-rovers who would smoke the pipe of calmness in the teeth of the wildest Biscayan gale, look askance at Golden Isle. If approach they must, the glass is never from the captain's hand, nor the line from the leadsman's. From time to time, some intrepid yacht makes a summer snatch at this sea-cherry, and is off again at the full stretch of her white pinions. The very steamboat captains—those hardly sufficiently recognized heroes of modern navigation—pretend to nothing, guarantee nothing, predicate nothing, in relation to their goings and returnings to and fro the Isle of Gold.

But for such as do set foot on its blest shores, what a scene of lavish glory is prepared! Cliffs pearl-white to ruby-red, passèmented with rich sea-green growths and streaked with gleaming sulphur, compose the fairy battlements which open upon a prospect to which no attribute of picturesque beauty seems wanting; and for those who weary of the silver sands and deep limpid pools, peopled (so say the divers, but at twenty fathoms deep the imagination grows lively) with creatures strange and lovely—for these, hill and valley, lake and lawn, moorland and forest, are ready to recall the fairest features of the mother land.


Distempered minds have fastened upon one supposed defect in the Golden Isle—*fogs*! Pshaw! If a pure silvery gauze that, like a bride's veil, tempers,

not conceals, the bewildering beauty underneath, and, when it rises, leaves, as in queenly compensation, a separate diamond on every leaf and flower—if this be fog, granted. To us, it is a mist of the mind, a fog of the fancy!

In the Golden Isle the birds and butterflies are more richly hued, the fruits larger (for we put aside as worthless the dropsical apples and turgid pears, skilfully swollen by hydraulic means for the Paris market), and the flora more varied and vivid than in any land beyond the tropics. Africa herself might be suspected of a slender brown finger in that glorious pie.

British as to her allegiance, the prevailing language of the isle is French. The greater portion of the resident families are of Breton origin, and many a great old name, smacking of history, may be met with, not only in connection with the stately country-seat and wide demesne, but modestly crowning the portal of some small store or wayside inn.

As a rule, estates run small in the Golden Isle, most proprietors contenting themselves with comparative strips of paradise, and eschewing the dignity, and therewith the care, of wide dominion. Hence 'hall,' 'towers,' 'park,' and 'abbey' are rarely found; while endearing and fantastic titles, such as 'Mon Loisir,' 'Mon Port,' 'Mon Bonheur,' 'Mon Rêve,' &c., culminating in 'Mon Vœu Suprême,' are familiar as hazel nuts in August. Among these—misnamed, alas!—lie the incidents of my strange sinister story.



Persons are yet living who can remember the arrival in the island of a retired Indian officer, Colonel Fonnereau, and the purchase by that gentleman of the beautiful villa and grounds of 'Mon Désir.' He had possessed considerable property in one of the West India Islands, but, on the death of his wife, resolved to relinquish it, and sending his only child, a daughter, to Europe for the advantage of climate and education, followed, himself, as soon as his affairs permitted. Colonel Fonnereau was still but forty-five, in the prime of health and vigour. When it is mentioned that to the dignity and self-possession of the soldier he added a noble person, gentle disposition, and winning manners, it will surprise no one to learn that his settling down in that pleasant locality was a welcome circumstance in the neighbourhood, the satisfaction being enhanced when, her cage being at length opened, his bright little bird, Geraldine, flew back to the paternal nest. She had been, for eighteen months, a boarder in a French convent in the isle ; but the period had been far from a painful one. She had been the solace and delight of the kind sisters, and the tears her father wiped away were not *all* for the joy of that coveted reunion.

Geraldine, though hardly fourteen, was advanced for her age, and ripening fast towards a beauty that promised to be marvellous. Her father, despite his own secret preconceived opinion as to her personal gifts, stood perfectly amazed at the change so short

a period had effected, and held her from him for a moment in fond but well-concealed exultation.


‘Papa! papa! what is the matter?’ asked Geraldine at length.

‘Why, what great gaunt thing is this they send me back?’ said the delighted father, forcing a frown, ‘with a great touzle of hair, and—and——My darling!’

The ‘touzle’ was spread upon the colonel’s broad chest like a corslet of gold.

The business of settling themselves in their beautiful abode was a new delight to Geraldine. Proud of her position as mistress of such a mansion, busy as fifty bees, she devoted herself entirely to her household cares, and with these and her father, whom she adored, would have been fully content. But the colonel liked society; society liked *him*—would have him; and, in effect, a period of five or six months saw him and his daughter established as chief favourites in the district of which ‘Mon Désir’ was the centre; while the fame of Miss Fon-nereau’s beauty knew no limits short of those of the Golden Isle itself.

Among the Golden Islanders no institution enjoys a greater popularity than the ‘pic-nic.’ It was on their return from one of these that the father and daughter sat talking over the incidents of the day, and exchanging confidences as to their mutual impressions. These were, as usual, tolerably harmonious; Geraldine being, however, especially frank



in her praises of a certain old Admiral Brunton, who had, it must be owned, availed himself of his seventy summers to flirt, in the most open and unscrupulous manner, with his beautiful young neighbour.

‘By the way,’ remarked the colonel, ‘there was another of the cloth—tall, curly-headed fellow—Hal—Hul—Huddleman.’

“Hal-di-mand,” said his daughter, distinctly.

‘If he had broken his neck in getting at those orchids,’ observed the colonel, calmly, ‘it would have been a kind of treason. The lives and energies of the royal navy are not intended for the supply of a girl’s “hortus siccus.” You should have stopped him, pussy.’

‘I tried, indeed, papa ; but—but he *would*——’

She checked herself, as if conscious of the slight colour that had mounted to her cheeks.

‘Hey?’ said the colonel, looking at her.

But Geraldine laughed lightly, and her father forgot the blush. Moreover, the next moment he found himself on the defensive.

‘By the way, dear,’ said Geraldine, slyly, laying her golden head on her father’s arm and looking up in his face, ‘there was also a lady present—tall, slender, long dark ringlets, greenish eyes—Min—Mar—what was her name? Papa, don’t pretend ; you *must* know ; you talked together for two hours.’

‘For two hours, say twenty minutes, and that by snatches,’ said the colonel. ‘She was pretty—she

was certainly pretty. I am not sure whether I like her or not. *Do I ?* ' (with an expression as if really seeking information). ' At all events, she puzzled me. I returned to her again and again, as to a riddle one must guess or be haunted with. Whence did she come ? Who invited her ? In short, who the deuce is she ? '

' Don't say deuce, papa,' said Geraldine, holding up a warning finger. ' Now, what will you give me to tell you ? '

' A pledge that she shall become my pussy's friend.'

Geraldine lifted her head.

' Hush, papa. Don't say that, even in joke.' Her pale face showed that she at least was in earnest.

' Geraldine, my darling ! What is the matter ? ' asked her father, anxiously.

' Nothing—nothing, dear. I—I cannot explain what I said, or meant to say. Only, I would rather not have this lady for a friend.'

' But who and what is she, my child ? ' persisted the colonel, his curiosity excited. ' Who told you about her ? '

' Nobody—that is, Admiral Brunton,' replied the young lady.

' Complimentary,' observed her sire.

' I mean, papa, I heard him talking of her ; and you know he does not speak in whispers. He might have been on his own quarter-deck, hailing somebody, " Ahoy ! maintop there ! It's Mrs Magniac—

Mrs Melusina Magniac. She hails from Mon Port in the Dell; and a very pretty haven it is for a sweet little buccaneer, armed and fitted for a cruise, to lie in wait in. Let the single craft look about them." That's what he said, or roared; and you might have heard him too, dear; but you were in action with the suspected vessel itself.'

'Humph!' said the colonel, thoughtfully. 'Magniac. I don't remember the name. Well, well, enough of the lady. But she is a stranger, my love; and we must always be on our guard——'

'Yes—yes, papa!'

'Against unfounded prejudices, I was about to say,' observed her father, gravely.

Geraldine got up, and placed herself before him.

'Papa, dear, answer. Are we not happy together?'

'As love-birds, pussy,' laughed her father, touching her dimpled cheek. 'So we intend to be, until the time—a long way off, I hope—when some thief will come and steal away my pet, my puss, and leave me weeping alone.'

'Papa,' said Geraldine, 'a bargain. *I'll* never marry, if *you* won't.'

'Nonsense, pet,' said the colonel.

'Papa, come here.' (She drew him towards a mirror that reflected their figures, full length.)

'What do you see?'

'A tall gaunt old gentleman, with scant grizzled locks and a scar on his left cheek-bone,' replied the

modest colonel (he might have added, with truth, with a feeble expression about the handsome mouth that belied the stately carriage).

‘You see, papa,’ said Geraldine, indignantly, ‘what *I* see—a glory of a man! as good as he is handsome, as brave as he is good—a dear loving papa, who believes his silly puss wise enough to choose her own way of happiness, and that is to remain always—yes, always—with him, and minister to *his*.’

Her father turned, and clasped her to his heart. But he made no other answer.

As the colonel, in his early canter next morning, passed through the neighbouring village, a thought struck him. He pulled up at the door of Monsieur Hyppolite Meritort (called by the English customers Merrythought), barber and gossip agent of the district. Gentlemen shaved, gentlemen partly shaved, and gentlemen waiting to be shaved, were abandoned to Madame Meritort and the assistant, and the barber came bustling forth. The colonel gave him some unimportant order, then carelessly added:

‘Mon Port, I hear, has got a tenant.’

‘An excellent one, my colonel,’ said the little barber, rubbing his hands; ‘a lady beautiful, rich, owning we know not what of rents, to trade a benevolence, to the poor an angel of pity. Already Madame has commanded twelve silk dresses from our neighbour, Mademoiselle Brefcomte, and soup at discretion, all the Saturdays, for the poor.’

‘Ah!’ said the colonel, pondering. ‘Soup, eh? and silk? Meritort,’ he added, ‘it is not my habit to ask questions about my neighbours; still, I have reasons for wishing to know something of this lady. My daughter——’

M. Meritort could not say from whence she had come. The question had been pointedly put to madame’s maid (that so remarkable person, who would have been a negro, only that she was white), and the singular answer returned was—what?

‘De la mer.’


‘Aha! A mermaid!’ laughed the colonel.

Monsieur Hyppolite respectfully copied the laugh.

‘It is possible. Monsieur knows that the baptismal name of madame is Melusina.’

Colonel Fonnereau remembered having read of those ‘monstres bizarres,’ described by the old French mariners as at once terrible and attractive—ferocious and love-inspiring—and acknowledged, in his own mind—that there were not wanting features of resemblance. He nodded to the little barber, and rode on.

‘A siren—with a white nigger for lady’s maid! The enigma thickens,’ thought the colonel. ‘I must see more of this Lady of the Sea. Good to the poor, eh? A sympathetic nature. There is something strangely appealing in her face. Seems to have known sorrow. Perhaps the deceased merman was a scamp—drank, or flirted with other sea-belles. Inexcusable, with a si-belle wife of his own!’ (The



colonel smiled at his own infant pun.) ‘By Jove, there she *is*!’

He had arrived nearly opposite a little cottage, from the door of which, at that moment, issued a female figure. In spite of a very homely dress, the colonel at once recognized Mrs Magniac. She paused, shyly, concealing something under her cotton shawl, and seemed disposed to let him pass; but Fonnereau, quickly alighting, greeted and shook hands with her. Now, for the first time, he scrutinized her countenance. She appeared to him about twenty-six or twenty-seven. A brighter complexion, more perfect brows, whiter teeth, could hardly be conceived. Silk could not rival her glossy hair. Her large hazel eyes certainly had a gleam in them, which might be pronounced green; but there burst from them, at intervals, a lustre little short (the gazer thought) of supernatural.

That she was a singularly beautiful woman, the colonel felt it would be insane to deny; and, as she tripped along by his side, closing up to him occasionally with a pretty terror of that rare and redoubtable animal, the horse, he took himself severely to task for having affected any doubt at all upon the subject. As to her humble dress, which, somehow, sat upon her exquisite figure like robes upon a queen, she laughingly apologized:

‘*La Pareuse* (my maid) scolds me dreadfully, I assure you, for going out “that figure,” but what would you have? One cannot play sick nurse in a

lace mantilla. I must give up my poor or my silks, my finery or my flannel.' And she allowed him to see that she carried under her shawl a roll of the latter material, together with an empty soup-jug. The colonel volunteered to relieve her of the interesting burden, but this she would not allow.

They became great friends in that short walk. Mrs Magniac was enthusiastic in her admiration of the kind neighbours who had hastened, from all sides, to cheer her solitude, and, with a clever and graceful compliment to the beauty of Miss Fonnercau, sealed her conquest of the colonel's goodwill. At parting, it was agreed that Mon Port and Mon Désir should henceforth live in close alliance; and the colonel, as he trotted homeward, resolved to do battle with his daughter's prejudice, and overcome all her hesitations, as he had his own.

In this he partially succeeded. Geraldine loved her father too fondly to offer persistent opposition to anything he might desire. Moreover, though possessing a rather high and haughty spirit, she was frank and generous by nature; and, acknowledging to herself that her repugnance towards Mrs Magniac had, as yet, no rational foundation, concealed, if she could not discard it.

Intercourse now became frequent, the colonel and his daughter riding over, and dropping anchor in Mon Port for hours together. Wealth, and a refined taste, were plainly traceable in all the appointments of that charming residence, while its sweet

and simple mistress was fascination itself. Her delight in Geraldine's beauty was almost infantine. She would gaze upon her, as if spell-bound. Her manner, always graceful and cordial, became absolutely fond, and poor Geraldine had many a twinge of conscience, in remembering that her mistrust and aversion, in relation to the Lady of the Sea, had not abated one atom.

On one occasion, Mon Port having to undergo some necessary repairs, Mrs Magniac, at the instance of the colonel, seconded, with less entreaty, by his daughter, passed several days at Mon Désir. She was accompanied by her remarkable attendant, La Pareuse.

The attachment of this creature to her mistress knew no bounds. It resembled a monomania. She appeared never to be happy, never commonly at ease, out of her presence. It was with difficulty she was prevented, while at Mon Désir, bivouacking at night outside her lady's chamber door. In a word, this strange woman, as singular in aspect as in mind (for she was in all respects, except in colour, a genuine negro, her complexion being of a ghastly bluish white), had, to all appearance, no voluntary being, her thought, will, conscience, aims, being thoroughly absorbed in, and yielded up to, that world—her mistress. But her great delight was the latter's toilette. La Pareuse would dress and deck her, as if the very lives of both depended on the final result. Mrs Magniac had to apologize for the

time expended in this manner, and for the foible of her maid.

‘I am nothing but a great big doll, am I?’ she would say, blushing and smiling, as she swam into the drawing-room, perfected to a hair.

It would have been idle to deny that art had a good deal to do with the matter. La Pareuse was of unsocial disposition, and, in the absence of her mistress from the house, generally locked herself up in her own room. Grinding, splashing, and gurgling had been heard within, and it was rumoured in the kitchen that the white nigger was concocting mysterious washes, &c., for the enhancement and perpetuation of the beauty she held so dear.

This was no time of tranquillity to Geraldine. She saw, with bitter regret—saw far more distinctly than the colonel himself—the tendency of Melusina’s wiles, and their growing influence upon his mind. In proportion as the possibility of her father’s union with this woman became more defined, so did her distrust and detestation become more difficult to veil. More than once, in conversation with the siren, she had suffered words to escape her which should have betrayed to the latter the dread of such a result. The Lady of the Sea only redoubled her smiles and caresses, and but that Geraldine detected and captured a tell-tale glance of confident triumph, she might have brought herself to believe Mrs Magniac guiltless of any ulterior aim. This one fatal look sufficed. Nor did it express only the exulta-



tion of success. There was in it entire consciousness of the antagonism with which she had to deal.

Overcome with her misgivings, Miss Fonnereau resolved to sound her father on the subject, hoping yet to stem the current of his fancy.

To her unspeakable comfort, the colonel laughed heartily, and, pinching her cheek, requested her to banish all suspicion that *Mon Désir* was to receive any other mistress than herself.

Melusina might have been astonished at the increased kindness and geniality on the part of her young hostess that day. Perhaps she suspected the cause. We only know that she dressed and smiled more bewitchingly than ever, and that the confident glance reappeared.

Things were in this position, when two misfortunes, occurring almost simultaneously, exercised a most injurious effect upon Colonel Fonnereau's affairs. The agent to whom he had delegated authority to complete the sale of his West India property, speculated with the purchase-money, failed, and fled to Australia. A financial company, also, in which the colonel held a serious stake, became involved in a manner to entail very heavy losses upon the shareholders. Colonel Fonnereau found it necessary to raise a large sum of money, larger, in fact, than he had securities to cover, and soon his altered manner, and the gloomy lines in his heretofore kind and pleasant face, bore sad testimony to his increasing anxieties.

It was in these darker days that the genuine kindness of Mrs Magniac shone most conspicuously forth. With the deepening trouble, her attachment to father and daughter only increased. Geraldine, despite herself, could not but be grateful for a sympathy so manifestly disinterested, and for the comfort it afforded her father.

The latter soon began to revive. His letters seemed to give him more satisfaction. His smiles came back. He openly announced that a great load had been removed from his mind, and matters resumed pretty much their usual course, except that Mrs Magniac—her consoling presence being no longer required—discontinued her visits, and now seldom or ever quitted Mon Port. The confidence between Geraldine and her father, which had been a little chilled, seemed fully re-established, and all was going merrily, when, one morning, a strange piece of news arrived.

A vulgar process, known as an ‘execution,’ had been put into Mon Port! The bewitching tenant was ruined!

This was no moment to desert the lonely woman. The colonel mounted his horse, and never drew rein till he reached Mon Port.

He was absent the whole of the day.

When he did return, his haggard look and disturbed demeanour struck Geraldine with terror.

‘Papa, papa! what has happened?’ she exclaimed, as she fell upon his neck, in tears.

Her father assured her, affectionately, that she should at once know all (that sinister 'all,' preface to so many a tale of imprudence and of sorrow), and, placing her by his side, commenced the painful story.

From this Geraldine learned that the recent improvement in her father's affairs had been due to the generosity of Mrs Magniac, who had, in her seductive manner, pressed upon her embarrassed neighbour the use of a very large sum of money, of which, she positively assured him, she had no present need. It was a little fraud of that description popularly styled 'pious.' She had herself borrowed the money! The fears of her creditors had become excited. Advantage had been taken of some informality, and she was called upon to refund the money. In doing so she had been reduced to the condition of her own cherished poor.

At this point the colonel paused. His colour brightened. He glanced at his child in a tender, troubled way. It was clear that the 'all' was not yet told; and Geraldine knew instinctively that the worst was to come. The colonel's lip quivered, but he dashed at it like a man. *Why* had Mrs Magniac done this? 'Why?' Her agitation had betrayed the secret she would have given worlds to conceal. *She loved him!*

There was no need of other words—no need of her father adding that he was in no position to return the loan—that, whatever might be his own

secret feeling, there was but one mode of reparation at his command. Their home must become *hers*—its master also . . . and his darling must forgive him. Yes, the Woman of the Sea had won!

The colonel's darling *did* forgive him. More than that. With all the fervour of her brave young heart she strove to reconcile herself to the change, and to love—if she *could*—the being she had hitherto detested.

II.

It surprised none of the keen-eyed Golden Islanders that Mrs Magniac shortly exchanged her name for that of Fonnereau—and reigned at Mon Désir.

To do the lady justice, she betrayed no atom of triumph. Mistress, of course, she was—and mistress she evidently intended to be—but Geraldine had abdicated with a grace and promptitude that left nothing to desire, and Melusina repaid her with a gushing tenderness nothing short of maternal—finding herself, in turn, amply recompensed by the increasing gratitude and confidence of her husband.

Her influence over the latter augmented, almost daily. Poor Geraldine, while unable to point to any one act or word, on the part of her stepmother, to justify her suspicion, became sensible that she was gradually undermining the attachment that had



hitherto subsisted between her father and herself. If this conviction—always bitterly present to her mind—occasionally tinged her speech, Melusina would meet it with a patient smile—or, what was more intolerable, a glance of intelligent appeal, to her husband—which, if it produced no present result, satisfied Geraldine that she would form an early subject of discussion between the pair.

Unluckily, the overbearing conduct of La Pareuse at this time begat dissensions in the lower house. This woman had conceived a violent aversion to Geraldine's maid—and so malignant and threatening was her demeanour, that the young lady deemed it best to allow the girl to seek another situation.

In departing, the latter, who was much attached to Geraldine, wept bitterly. Miss Fonnereau consoled her.

'Tain't for myself, miss,' sobbed Alice. 'Don't ye comfort *me*—but do—oh, do as *I'm* a-doing.—*Go!*'

Geraldine long remembered the strange, wistful look the girl bent upon her, as she hurried from the room and house.

A well-timed incident now occurred. Geraldine received a pressing invitation from the kind Superior of the convent in which she had passed so many happy days, to revisit that tranquil spot.

Reluctant, indeed, to leave her father—yet growing, hourly, less content at home—Geraldine overbore the faint opposition that was made to her

acceptance of the proposal—and quickly found herself once again among the loving sisterhood.

Weeks soon grew to months, and there was no talk of Geraldine's return (indeed, at this time no pretext was required, as the young lady, suffering from a severe sprain, was unable to quit the sofa), when a letter, containing another for Geraldine, reached the Superior. It was from Mrs Fonnereau, and entreated that the sad tidings she had to communicate might be carefully broken to her dear child.

Colonel Fonnereau had died suddenly.

Nothing could be more tender and considerate than the language of this letter. Mrs Fonnereau was evidently heart-stricken by her sudden bereavement, and found consolation only—next Heaven—in the hope of shortly mingling her tears with those of her beloved child.

'You have an earthly mother yet, my love,' remarked the kind Superior, through her tears, as she folded up the letter.

Disabled from looking once more upon the benign face, thus suddenly turned away, Geraldine preferred the consolations she had already found, and without proposing to return home, waited patiently for whatever fate Heaven should send her.

It now transpired that the colonel's affairs were in a more prosperous condition than he had supposed. Certain shares, which Fonnereau, an indifferent man of business, had laid aside as comparatively worthless,



turned out to be of considerable market value. More unexpected still, the defaulting agent, who had carried with him a part of the purchase-money of the West India estate, in a form not easy to negotiate, soothed his conscience to a certain extent, by restoring the same.

These incidents, unluckily, only followed the colonel's death. Unaware that his available assets quadrupled the loan he had accepted from Melusina, the honest gentleman by his will bequeathed every shilling that remained to him, in reduction of that debt. Lastly—'confiding absolutely,' said the will, 'in the oft-repeated promise of my dear wife that she will ever regard and treat my beloved daughter as if the latter were her own child—I commit our Geraldine to her sole control and guardianship, until she shall come of age or be married.'

The Lady of the Sea had won indeed !

The discovery of her position was a thunderstroke to Geraldine, and cost her bitter tears. The loss of her inheritance she might have borne, since it seemed, in a measure, due to accident ; but that her father, so loving and considerate, should have delivered up his darling, bound hand and foot, to the woman whom, alone of all living, she hated, and whose objects she had openly, though vainly, opposed, *this* proved the existence of some sinister power which might still be exerted to her harm.

There was no help—but there was hope. Melusina's nature might have benefited by later associa-

tions. Her language was open and affectionate. Geraldine felt that she might be doing her injustice. Nevertheless, she clung instinctively to her present happy refuge, and would have been content to remain for ever. At last, however, the summons came.

Mrs Fonnereau wrote that she had disposed of *Mon Désir*, and engaged a residence better suited to their feelings and circumstances. It was a large old mansion known as 'Leafy Dell,' situated in a very quiet neighbourhood, where she and her child might, with little interruption, enjoy the sad but sweet remembrance of happy days gone by. Geraldine must (she added with sweet authority) give her first proof of duty by joining her there immediately.

This was accompanied by a letter to the Superior, to the same effect; with the addition that the writer, in accordance with a promise given to her husband, in his last hours, intended to withdraw, for the present, from the world, and devote herself, wholly and exclusively, to the training, education, and general welfare of his child.

Again the kind Superior acknowledged, with tears, the honesty of purpose that could induce a person of Mrs Fonnereau's tastes and habits, to act as she proposed.

But Geraldine's pale cheeks flushed.

'Education!' she repeated, slowly—'I am sixteen!—Training!—*Hers?*'

The Superior hinted something about 'finishing masters.'



‘In that neighbourhood, my mother!’ said Geraldine, gloomily.

Her friend found it difficult to comfort the poor girl. The very prospect of the exclusive companionship of Melusina—without mention of her strange, repulsive follower—was abhorrent to her. There was but one reassuring reflection :

‘Your father must have loved her,’ said the Superior.

And Geraldine went.

If Leafy Dell was situated in a ‘quiet neighbourhood,’ it had its own excellent reasons. People do not, as a rule, prefer to reside in the immediate vicinity of a madhouse, and such, up to a recent period, had been the character of the dwelling Mrs Fonnereau had selected. The establishment had been mismanaged. There were dark rumours of maltreatment of the unhappy inmates. At all events, it was broken up, and reorganized elsewhere, the proprietor trusting to a low rent, and the really beautiful, but gloomy and neglected grounds, to find more eligible occupants.

Any one peeping into the vast drawing-room of Leafy Dell, at this time, might have seen Mrs Fonnereau in close consultation with a lady tall of stature—with stern, handsome features, and a hand which, as it lay open on the table, showed white as snow, yet large and muscular as that of a man.

She was there in consequence of an advertisement

which (for we write no fiction) may be read in the Times of that date.

‘GOVERNESS WANTED. To undertake the undivided charge, and complete the education, of a pupil whose mind and talents have been misdirected—whose nature is morose and difficult—and for whose improvement the union of womanly instruction with *masculine firmness* is absolutely essential. Qualities adapted to this exceptional case will command a most liberal reward. Address, &c.’

To judge by the countenances and mutual demeanour of the pair, their acquaintance, though but a few hours old, had ripened into an excellent understanding. Their confidence almost resembled conspiracy—else, why—when the hollow-sounding house-bell announced an arrival—should they start, and exchange a meaning grasp of the hand—followed by the abrupt departure of the strange, strong woman from the room?

Mrs Fonnereau received Geraldine with a tenderness only qualified by that sweet maternal superiority that became her new position towards the lonely girl. Her stepchild liked this better—it was more real—and began to think the intercourse would prove more tolerable than her fears foretold. She resolved to do her utmost to love the woman her father had loved, and with whom her lot seemed inevitably cast.

As they sat together in the dusk, awaiting dinner, Mrs Fonnereau began to speak of ‘education.’

‘I declare you have grown quite French, my

love,' she said, laughing sweetly, but a little reprovingly.

'French is almost my natural tongue,' said Geraldine, quietly. 'Little else is spoken by the sisters.'

'We must forget the sisters,' returned her stepmother. 'Your dear father was thoroughly English. His tastes, habits, and wishes were my law. We shall, I trust, undo much that has been mislearned, and commence anew. And take note, sweet one, I shall expect implicit obedience! Not one rebellious word!'

'I have been accustomed to consider my education completed, mad—mamma, that is,' said Geraldine, haughtily. 'May I ask in what I am to benefit by your instruction?'

'In nothing, love,' replied Melusina. 'Mine is but an affectionate supervision. I leave all *that* to Mrs Manning.'

'Mrs Manning!'

'Your governess.'

'Governess!' repeated Miss Fonnereau. 'A governess? *For me?*'

Melusina uttered a little silvery laugh, and her eyes sent a cat-like glance through the darkening room. She made no other reply.

'Please to remember,' resumed Geraldine, her bosom heaving, 'that I am already a woman.'


'Do not make me forget it, dear,' replied her stepmother, sweetly. 'Want of filial obedience and docility must be reckoned as childish faults, and dealt with accordingly.'

‘Want of—I do not understand you,’ said Geraldine, rising.

‘Hush—I beg! Compose yourself, my dear,’ said her stepmother, in a reassuring tone. ‘Do not alarm our good Mrs Manning, who will be here in a moment, with so early a display of what I must call—temper. Please to remember, in your turn, that your father, dear soul! confided you to my sole care. You have—have we not *all*?—faults to correct, deficiencies to make good. Alone, I am unequal to such a task. I have therefore—Hush, here she is.’

The door had opened, and Mrs Manning’s stately figure moved darkly up the room. Geraldine felt that there was something imposing in the stern yet gracious manner of her greeting, and, overawed despite herself, went through the ceremony of introduction as though in a dream.

That evening was a strange one to Geraldine. The novelty of her position, the manner of her companions, her own doubt and sorrow, her wounded pride—these, all together, cowed her spirit. Some irresistible power seemed to be compelling her, struggle as she would, to accept the circumstances in which fate had placed her. What if she did? Only for a short time longer; she was past sixteen. Could they pretend to treat her as a child? A prompt and cheerful acquiescence might be the wiser course. And with that resolution, made on her pillow, the poor child wept herself to sleep, and dreamed of her father.




The next day lessons began. Mrs Manning examined her, calmly and rigidly, neither praising her acquirements nor noticing shortcomings; then, briefly laying out a general plan of study, supplied her with the needful books, and left her to tasks of no slight description. Her manner, without actual severity, was hard and distant. Nevertheless, Geraldine did not despair of conciliating her, and, in pursuance of her overnight determination, applied herself heartily to her work.

Her reward was a half-smile, and a glance which at once expressed surprise and taught Geraldine that her governess's aim had been to test her abilities to the utmost.

Later the three walked in the sombre grounds, Melusina cold, but gentle; Mrs Manning lofty and didactic; Geraldine sad and thoughtful, with a singular prescience of some impending evil whose nature she could not divine. One thing only was clear. It was intended to make her understand that she was a child again, without independence of movement or of mind. She could not repress a shudder as she glanced at the dismal mansion, with its huge strong portals and barred casements, and noticed that through the gloomy avenues that encircled it no human dwelling was visible.

The next day, and the next, and the next, Miss Fonnereau observed that her lessons were gradually augmented. Also, that her governess, far from commending her proficiency, seemed rather disappointed



at finding no cause of rebuke; still she worked on. 'The company of' her hardest books was preferable to that of Melusina, who affected to have no business, uninvited, in what was called the 'school-room.'

One morning Geraldine, in replying to her governess, made use (as she had often done before) of a French expression.

'Speak English, if you please, Miss Fonnereau,' said Mrs Manning, corrugating her stern white brows.

'It is so habitual with me,' pleaded Geraldine.

'No reply. I have warned you,' said Mrs Manning.

Geraldine coloured, and glanced at her preceptor. Again, the sense of her helpless position seemed to chain her tongue. She bowed her head, and again promised herself to do what she might to obey.

Habits, however, are not to be overcome at a word. Next morning the dreadful offence was repeated.

'This is unfortunate,' said the governess, coldly, and closing the book she had in her hand. 'I must correct you.'

'Correct me!' exclaimed Geraldine, flushing scarlet. 'For what? And how?'

'For disobedience. With *this*,' was the deliberate reply.

Mrs Manning rose, and going to a cabinet, unlocked it, and produced a small and thin, but spiteful-looking, riding-rod.

The sight of the humiliating instrument was too much.

‘Great heavens, madam!’ cried Geraldine, starting up; ‘are you going to assault me?’

‘Bare your neck and shoulders,’ answered Mrs Manning, composedly as ever. ‘*We* call it chastisement.’

‘I will die first!’ exclaimed Geraldine, bursting into a passion of tears. ‘I am going to acquaint Mrs Fonnereau of this outrage.’

‘That may be best,’ replied Mrs Manning. And she laid down the whip.

Melusina was tranquilly at work, when Geraldine, panting and weeping, burst into the room, and related the insult she had received.

Mrs Fonnereau’s slightly enamelled features betrayed no sympathy. She even smiled. This, however, passed, and she looked steadily at the agitated girl.

‘Geraldine, my dear, you quite forget yourself. You call upon me, with authority, to dismiss this excellent lady, whose aid I have, at great personal sacrifice to myself, secured on your behalf. Her invariable condition is, that no one interferes with her system of education. To resist is to lose her. I have been compelled to pay her highly, in advance. Dismissal is out of the question. But what I can do I will. Let us go back to her.’

She drew her stepchild’s arm within her own. It felt like the coil of a snake. The reception of her

just complaint had given shape to her indefinite mis-giving. Geraldine was already convinced that a secret understanding existed between the two women to degrade and mortify — perhaps maltreat her. What was to be done?

‘For *my* sake, dear Mrs Manning,’ said Melusina, with a sweet, entreating smile, as they re-entered, ‘you will forgive my wilful one—*will* you not?’

‘At your request. For this time,’ replied that imperturbable lady. Then, turning icily to her pupil: ‘Music next, if you please.’

The next morning, Geraldine, the tumult of whose mind had rendered her unfit for study, found her tasks once more augmented. She lost heart, and, on a sharp reproof from her governess, flung down the book, declaring she could do no more. If she intended to kill her, she might.

‘I do not destroy; I mend,’ said Mrs Manning, unimpassioned as ever. And once more the riding-rod appeared.

‘By what right do you offer me this outrage, defenceless as I am?’ cried Geraldine, indignantly. ‘You are stronger than I, it is true; but lay one finger on me, and I will shriek till I am heard and rescued.’

‘Spare your cries,’ replied the governess. ‘There is no one within hearing of this house who will not disregard them. As for my strength—look here.’

She caught Geraldine’s wrists in one hand.

The action manacled her, as it were, with rings of

steel. Nor that alone ; it seemed to paralyze her entire frame. At the same moment the woman fixed her great gloomy eyes upon her with a stare so concentrated and menacing, that the poor girl, sickening with terror, felt as if she were in the clutches of some furious beast.

‘Spare me!’ she gasped. ‘I will—will obey!’

‘Well for yourself that you have done so. Bare your neck and shoulders.’

Mrs Manning released the trembling hands, which had hardly strength to do the office commanded. They did it at length ; and Geraldine’s fair neck and round pearl-white shoulders received the first angry touch they had ever known. The strokes were few, perhaps slight ; but each elicited a low cry—the plaint of wounded delicacy, not of pain.

Then her governess locked up the whip, and left the room.

It would be useless to dwell upon the anguish of the succeeding moments. The thought that *she*—the tenderly-nurtured child, the darling of the kind convent sisterhood, the grown accomplished woman—should be exposed to the punishment of a child—worse, of a slave! Geraldine gazed wildly round, and waved her arms as if for help. Then the thought of escape occurred. She flew to the barred casement.

There, without, as if anticipating her intent, stood, like a motionless sentinel, the horrible La Pareuse! Geraldine fancied she saw upon her

ghastly face a grin of exultation. From that moment she felt her situation hopeless.


In effect, the victory was already gained. An idea that they intended to render her mad, and, if thwarted, might use some dreadful violence, took possession of her perturbed mind. She ceased to resent or oppose the orders given her.

Mrs Manning did not use her triumph nobly. She increased the tasks, she repeated (and increased) the correction, until, one day, mad with pain and shame, Geraldine broke in upon her stepmother, and, turning her beautiful wealed shoulders to her gaze :

‘See!’ she exclaimed—‘cruel, heartless woman! See how I am used under your roof—perhaps with your sanction—the child of the man whose wishes were your law—*your* law! Is *this* your tenderness and care? Did you take my inheritance—almost, alas! my father’s love—away from me, and are these shameful lashes your inhuman return?’

Melusina turned her green lambent eyes slowly on the speaker.

‘And you dare address this speech to me?’ she said, in a low creeping tone, and, rising, seemed to uncoil like a surprised snake that shows its fangs. ‘Reproaches to *me*? complaints to *me*? Then take the truth. Do you conceive, you little fool, that I have not read you from the first—that I was insensible to the hatred and contempt you dared to feel towards a woman every way your superior?—your disparagement of me to your simple fool of a



father?—your arts and wiles to defeat my marriage? No, girl. I knew them all. It was a doubtful battle, but you are defeated, and I have you prisoner, bound and fettered. I hate you. Do you hear? Your shame and sufferings are of my invention. I took this solitary den, I hired this truculent woman, to help me to humble your proud heart, destroy your beauty, degrade you, body and soul, at my feet. Yes, my pet—my “pussy,” as you loved to be called—the “mermaid” has got the better of the cat, and she cannot save her glossy skin! To your keeper!’

Geraldine had scarcely heard the concluding words. Stricken with surprise and terror, she had sunk in a senseless heap on the floor.

A severe illness followed, of which she remembered little. When she recovered, a change had come over her whole being. Her loveliness had faded, but the change in her whole system was more touching still. Her high spirit had departed. Oppressed and hopeless, she submitted wearily to any tyranny the two women chose to inflict.

At length even Mrs Manning, the impassive, began to tire. She had, at least, the doubtful merit of disliking non-resistance. As a beast of prey, she was of that nobler sort that prefers a hunt and a scuffle.

Passing near Geraldine’s room, one day, and fancying she heard her voice, she looked in. The inmate was kneeling at the window, her thin hands clasping the bars.

'What are you doing, my dear?' inquired the governess, tenderer than usual, she knew not why.

Geraldine turned her white worn face to her.

'Trying to forgive you!' she answered.

Her governess looked fixedly at her, and retired without a word.

Five minutes later she walked, with her usual measured stateliness, into the drawing-room.

'I am sorry,' she said to Mrs Fonnereau, 'to seem abrupt, but I leave you this day.'

'To return—when?'

'Never.'

'Never? And—the money—the three hundred?'

'Is here,' said Mrs Manning, placing some notes upon the table, with her habitual grace—'excepting only the wages of an upper domestic, which I have ventured to retain. I may be an instrument of severity; my necessities may have tempted me to become one of revenge; but I am opposed, on principle, to murder; and, with permission, these words shall be our last.'

She curtseyed, and, in ten minutes, had quitted Leafy Dell.

'It matters not,' said Melusina, to herself. 'Money saved. I can manage her alone, *now*.'

Let us draw the veil over the cruelty that ensued. It is possible that Mrs Manning's sinister augury might have been fulfilled. But rescue was at hand, and coming fast, from an unexpected quarter.

The reader may remember the name of a certain



Lieutenant Haldimand, R.N., who, at a certain picnic, had made the acquaintance of Miss Fonnereau. He had never forgotten the beautiful girl, and, with a constancy rarely seen in these later times, embraced the very first opportunity to revisit the isle that contained his treasure. He traced her to the convent. He traced her to Leafy Dell. While devising means for renewing his acquaintance, hitherto of the slightest, with the inmates of that residence, he, as by special providence, fell in with Alice Corham, Geraldine's faithful maid, who, in consequence of some dark rumour concerning her beloved mistress, was hovering in the neighbourhood, hoping to obtain information.

That which she had to communicate so startled and alarmed young Haldimand, that, being a man of action, he rode straightway to Leafy Dell, and, entering almost unopposed, presented himself to Mrs Fonnereau, as one charged with a mission to her stepdaughter, with whom he politely begged an interview.

Melusina, on account of the 'dear girl's' health, was compelled to refuse; but did so in her sweetest manner, and exercised so many fascinations, that the young man, puzzled, bewildered, and half admiring, began to think his informant in error, and, a little ashamed at having so misjudged the still beautiful creature before him, took reluctant leave.

'What fools are men!' soliloquized the victorious Melusina, as she gazed at her own face in the mirror

that night, La Pareuse caressing her hair. 'He has been idolizing that miserable thing above: he showed me his errand and his heart at once! And for all that, I could win him from her. *I*!—ah! that would be the crowning triumph! But then—these lines—these lines.' And she touched her tinted cheek, where La Pareuse's utmost skill had failed in its combat with time!

The white negro stooped her woolly head to her mistress's ear, and whispered. The latter started, and gazed at her.

'You are jesting!'

'My life upon it. It is certain. The smoothness and beauty of a morning rose, *yourself*—again sixteen.'

'La Pareuse, it is horrible.'

'To *her*, madame means?' grinned the negro.

'To me. Tell me, La Pareuse, do they hang, in this land, for—for murder?' asked Mrs Fonnereau.

'It is not murder. *I* will take care of this, my most lovely neck!' said La Pareuse, laying her finger, with unaffected love and admiration, on her mistress's. 'But a few drops. Bright as a rose! *To-morrow*? he will come again to-morrow.'

'To-morrow,' replied Melusina, faintly. 'Go, *now*.'

Lieutenant Haldimand did come to-morrow. But he had learned more—*much* more—and being, as I have said, a man of action, came armed with two useful weapons, a doctor's certificate and a magistrate's search-warrant, and accompanied by the doctor himself, and a constable.



Proceeding to the back or kitchen entrance, the constable took charge of an alarmed young lady, who acted as scullion, and general drudge to La Pareuse. By her, they were directed straight to the apartment occupied by Miss Fonnereau, the door of which stood open.

With stealthy steps, the visitors approached. Heavy breathing and moans were audible within. Another step, and La Pareuse could be seen, kneeling at the foot of Geraldine's bed. So intent was she on her occupation, that the doctor laid his hand upon her shoulder before she was aware of his presence.

'Bleeding to death, ah!' he said, taking from her hand a basin half-filled, and, pushing the woman aside with his foot, hastily stanching the blood that was streaming from a vein punctured in each of the poor girl's white attenuated feet.

'Take her, constable,' said Haldimand. 'Now, woman, where is your fiend of a mistress?'

'Don't hurt me. It is not murder!' shrieked the woman. 'She is not even hurt. I gave her a sleeping potion. Look—she is awaking!'

'Not hurt!' cried the indignant doctor. 'Take blood from a shadow like that, and tell me she is not hurt!'

'We only borrowed it,' said La Pareuse, sullenly.

'"*Borrowed*" it!' echoed the doctor.

'It was for my mistress, to keep her beautiful. Books say that if you touch your face with the living

blood of a pure young thing like that, the beauty comes again.'

'Books? Devils' books. Faugh!' growled the doctor. 'Where's your mistress, you old witch?'

'At her toilette.'

'Let us help. Come, Haldimand.'

They ran down-stairs.

'Go you first,' said the doctor, pushing La Pareuse forward. The latter entered the chamber.

The next moment she uttered a shriek so piercing that it was heard, people said, at the distance of a mile. All rushed in.

The graceful figure of Melusina was seated at the toilette-table. She was leaning her cheek on her hand, but the finger-tips were crimsoned, and the still and fearful face, reflected in the mirror, bore streaks and patches of the same hue. Instinctively the men shrunk back. There was little need of La Pareuse's shriek of agony.

'Dead! Dead! Dead!'

In the emotion of that horrible toilette, some vessel had given way, and her own blood had actually mingled with that which this wretched slave of vanity and passion was using, as she hoped, for her own adornment, and the success of an evil end.

Geraldine lived to regain her beauty, and reward her gallant rescuer, and Leafy Dell resembles its former self only in name.



MR LUFKIN AT A BULL-FIGHT.

NO—it weren't in our home paddock—neither were it in the Four Acre, which the fences are not all I could desire, and cattle, if restless, and out of yummer with flies and what not, has been know'd to work through. Don't let none o' you be startled. Now, then. 'Twere in Spain, actiwallly in Spain! If hanybody had ventered to tell me that I, James Lufkin, should one day travel to Sarah Gosser, I should have felt inclined for to punch his head, as chaffin' of me. Howsoever, the day come, I went, and this is how 'twas.

Imagine the astonishment of me and Mrs Hel, when, one morning, as we was at breakfast, up comes the postman to the winder, and delivers in a letter bearin' a forren stamp—head of a young 'oman, hup-side down, featur's good, but perky, hinscription, 'Correyos Reales.'

'Why, what d'ye make o' this?' I asks.

'Queen o' Spain's, I fancy,' says the postman,



with the indifference of his specious. 'You're "senior" Lufkin, I suppose?' he adds, grinning.

'Well, there a'n't no junior, *yet*,' says I, with a wink at my missis, which coloured, and poured out the tea.

Sure enough, the letter was addressed to 'Señor Lufkin, Goodburn-close, Hogsmead, Lincoln, Hanglatare.' Hafter spekilatin' nigh half-an-hour who it could possibly be from, we opened it. Who *should* it be, but Tom, my missis's cousin (you remember Tom?) which took us to see the Mrs Davingpodge, and which we'd never set heyes on, since that curious hinvestigation.

Now, Tom is that sort o' movable chap, that, if you heerd of him yesterday at Broadstairs, you might reasonably expect a note from him to-morrow, from the himmediate vicinity of ancient Babylon. If he telegraphed from Chaney, that he was off to Japan, having took final leaf of England, my missis, without any hobobservation, would get our spare bed ready for him, to-morrow. We wasn't surprised, therefore, to find that Tom had wisited Sarah Gosser.

Nor it wasn't so very strange, his writin' to *me*. Hever since that evening at the Mrs Davingpodge's, we had been, though we never met, the best o' friends. He came home to supper that night with us, and after we'd spoke of the hevents of the hevening, and I'd gone so far as to allow that the sudden huntying of a rope, under very peculiar and critical circumstances, might be a useful haccomplishment to a



certain class o' men, my wife went up to bed, and we had a deal o' friendly talk, Tom and me had, hover our pipes and toddy. We agreed that we had been very sad fellows, and sowed a mighty power o' wild oats, to be sure ! (My wust enemies wouldn't accuse me of much in *that* line ; but my hobject, you see, were to set poor Tom at his hease, and seem wery penitent for what I hadn't done.) But that we felt it were now high time to steady down, and putt our shoulders to the wheel.

Tom was franker than ever I know'd him. He told me all his adventures, the fortins he'd been on the brink o' making, and the ill-luck that spiled so many of his hexlent designs, the theayter he'd built, with self-hacting scenery, lights, and box-keeping, which went to smash ; the 'Hevery 'Alf-hour Hexpress' which cum to grief ; the gun which bust ; and the Polish conspiracy, which was hanged in hinfancy.

He had now got in hand a wonderful Drayma, which, being took from the French, and put into Irish, with a railway smash, and a plunge down the Falls of Niagara, would make the fortins of half the managers in Europe, besides helevating the drama almost out o' sight.

In return, I told him the luck I had had at Hogsmead, 'specially with beasts, and of the good bit o' money I had already put by. This pleased Tom wery much. We got more and more agreeable together. We shook hands a good many times, in the course o' the evening, and, I don't remember

much else, 'cept that, next morning, I found that one o' my ten pun'-notes had turned into a I. O. U., bearin' the signature, shaky, but legible, 'Thomas Ketcham Tirritup.'

(I never mentioned that little hepisode to Mrs Hel, and if ever this comes to be published, in the same singular manner as the former, I only begs that the printer'll leave out the last parrowgraft.)

Now, we comes back to Tom's letter.

'Twas wrote in the best o' sperrets, Tom statin' that he was already good 'alf-way up the 'ill o' fortune, which he'd been so long a-bungling at the foot of. Seeing how lucky I had been in the bullock line, he had gone in for a branch of the same, and was already half-proprietor of one o' the wery finest establishments in Sarah Gosser. Such were the popilarity of the stock—'specially small but hactive bulls, supplied from the grazing farms of Ramirez Vermijo and Tirritup—that it was sometimes hard to make room for all that came to bid. They did a little in horses, too, but weren't so lucky as in t'other. It seems bulls didn't agree with 'em. At all events, the mortality in the stable was wery serious, and Tom hinted that a consignment of animals from England—'specially of cab-'osses as had served their four or five year, and had anything the matter—exceptin' glarnders — would be wery acceptable. Hoddly enough (added Tom) they was in a position to give five shillings more for a blind 'oss, than one as saw.



‘Well, Jem, I never!’ put in my wife. ‘That is a queer fancy.’

‘The work,’ Tom adds, ‘is “hexceptional.”’

‘What’s that, Hel?’

‘Mill work,’ says I (I always likes to make ready answer)—‘grinding bones, or something o’ that kind. It’s depressing to a thinkin’ ’oss to be walkin’ round and round, and seeing what his own bones is gradually workin’ to.’

‘Do ’osses think?’ asks my wife.

‘What d’ye suppose their brains is doing all day long, in the stable?’ I asks. Then, before she’d time to ask me what *I* thought they was doing, I reads on.

“With *your* experience, an’ a little capital, I could dewelope the business o’ Ramirez Vermijo and Tirritup to a hextent hundreamed of in the wildest wisions o’ avarice. Hafter that, I’ll sit down a contented man.”’

‘Poor Tom!’ says Mrs Hel, wisely effected; ‘he’s not a bad fellow, you see.’

“You remember our conversation,” I continued, reading, “after the sworry, shay Davingpodge Brothers, and how we agreed that, having now, both on us, had our swing and enj’yed our little games——”’

‘Hey-day!’ says Mrs Hel, sharp; ‘read that again. What hever does he mean by that?—*your* little games—*your* litt——’

‘’Spouse he illudes to my hentering my old mare

that night, La Pareuse caressing her hair. 'He has been idolizing that miserable thing above: he showed me his errand and his heart at once! And for all that, I could win him from her. *I!*—ah! that would be the crowning triumph! But then—these lines—these lines.' And she touched her tinted cheek, where La Pareuse's utmost skill had failed in its combat with time!

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'It is not murder. *I* will take care of this, my most lovely neck!' said La Pareuse, laying her finger, with unaffected love and admiration, on her mistress's. 'But a few drops. Bright as a rose! *To-morrow?* he will come again to-morrow.'

'To-morrow,' replied Melusina, faintly. 'Go, *now*.'

Lieutenant Haldimand did come to-morrow. But he had learned more—*much* more—and being, as I have said, a man of action, came armed with two useful weapons, a doctor's certificate and a magistrate's search-warrant, and accompanied by the doctor himself, and a constable.

Proceeding to the back or kitchen entrance, the constable took charge of an alarmed young lady, who acted as scullion, and general drudge to La Pareuse. By her, they were directed straight to the apartment occupied by Miss Fonnereau, the door of which stood open.

With stealthy steps, the visitors approached. Heavy breathing and moans were audible within. Another step, and La Pareuse could be seen, kneeling at the foot of Geraldine's bed. So intent was she on her occupation, that the doctor laid his hand upon her shoulder before she was aware of his presence.

'Bleeding to death, ah!' he said, taking from her hand a basin half-filled, and, pushing the woman aside with his foot, hastily stanching the blood that was streaming from a vein punctured in each of the poor girl's white attenuated feet.

'Take her, constable,' said Haldimand. 'Now, woman, where is your fiend of a mistress?'

'Don't hurt me. It is not murder!' shrieked the woman. 'She is not even hurt. I gave her a sleeping potion. Look—she is awaking!'

'Not hurt!' cried the indignant doctor. 'Take blood from a shadow like that, and tell me she is not hurt!'

'We only borrowed it,' said La Pareuse, sullenly.

'"*Borrowed*" it!' echoed the doctor.

'It was for my mistress, to keep her beautiful. Books say that if you touch your face with the living

To be sure, going to Spain is not a heveryday affair ; still, there was no call for the club givin' me a farewell dinner at the Salutation. Have it, however, they *would*. All I stipulated for was, that there was to be no speeches—that it were not to be called a 'dinner,' but a convivial repast, and that Stephen Dumbush, who had never been heerd to utter anything beyond a grunt, in the memory of man, was to be in the chair. There were to be no formality, nor nothin' stronger than rum-punch.

When the day come, though nothin' was *said* about any dinner, the coincidences as happened was curious in the hextreme. Everybody seemed to have particular business at Hogsmead—as might keep them out till bed-time. Neighbour Burdock, Stephen Dumbush, and old Bullwinkle—rode in together. Singlerly, everybody'd hordered dinner at the same hour—half-past four ! There was a table at the Salutation, haccidentally laid for twenty-five, just the number as chanced to meet ! The big chair, at the top, 'appened to be hoccupied by Mr Dumbush. Into the chair on his right hand, I permiscuously dropped, and we found ourselves dining sumptuously, and makin' a din you might have heard at Lincoln !

Honly distant illusions was at first made to our journey. — ' Our neighbour's brief habsence ' — ' Lufkin's hinteresting project ' — ' Jem's little forrin start,' etc. Hafterwards as we warmed up, they was more plain.

George Burdock remarked that, o' course, he wasn't going to make a speech, but he *did* see a gentleman present which to drink a cordial health to—and his wife—wouldn't do no harm to anybody. The party he had in his heye was going to a distant land, of which wery little was generally know'd, except that there was hinsurrections twice a week, and a down right rebellion hevery 'alf year. It was hard to get at, but he believed that, when a man giv' his mind to it, and arrived, there was good cattle—'specially bulls—and he hoped that the wisit of Mr Lufkin would lead to such a cordial hinterchange of beasts, as would be creditable to both countries. With the consent of the chair (Mr Dumbush nodded) he would give the health of Mr and Mrs Lufkin, of Goodburn Close.

Mr Stonedyke, though mindful of the ginerall understanding that there was to be no speeches, could not deny himself the pleasure of seconding that proposal, hadding that, since their respected neighbour had already distinguished himself as a author—in regard to sperrets—the public would be nat'rally impatient for his views with respect to the crossin' o' red Herefords with the short-horned northern stock.

Mr Bullwinkle would only say one word. Mention had been made of Spanish bulls. For John Bull to have to be taught by a Spaniard what a bull was, almost amounted to an Irish one. He thought that the only advantage of Spanish stock over our'n,

was an hincreased hincination to fight, and tempers more heasily hagggravated.

Young Tom Thicknesse (which an't wery bright) wished to ask one question. He believed as Spain led through France. He read, at schoob, that the French kep' their accounts in franks and sows. Now, for travellers, like Mr Lufkin, to carry sows——

Tom was stopped by a sing'ler hincident. Stephen Dumbush, which had hitherto done his duty so admirably, in the chair, that you needn't have know'd he was present, and hadn't uttered a voluntary word since he was married—nigh twenty years ago—suddenly gets up! A convulsion o' nature wouldn't have surprised us more. He lays down his pipe, as though he shouldn't want it again for half an hour—he looks slowly round—his eyes goggle—he opens his mouth. Then he shuts it again—and sits down. Whether his courage failed him—whether he thought he'd made a speech, and hadn't—or whether he was only countin' noses, with a view to the bill—were never know'd, to this day!

After recovering a little from the disappointment Stephen had giv' us, everybody drunk my health and Mrs Hel's, and I returned thanks, merely observing that I would follow the hexlent example set me, and hadd nothing—or less. True, I were about to wisit Sarah Gosser, and my friend Rummyres Frummagio had already kissed my wife's 'and—by post, which was Spanish for 'how-d'ye-do? Wery glad to see you.' If the presence of a blunt Englishman could go any


ways to 'eal any little soreness that might still exist on the score of the Harmada, I should be wery glad, and if I found their stock hinferior to ours, gladder still. Mr Stonedyke need not hexpect hanything from my pen. Sheep, not hink, filled my pens! My letter concernin' the sperrets was a privileged communication. It was addressed to a humble country-print, and, lo and be'old! it comes out in a wery different paper, conducted by a gentleman which could have know'd nothing of *me*—unless it might have been at the Tugmorden Hagricultural, as second-silver in boar-pigs, and 'igh commendation in turnips. My neighbour Bullwinkle might be heasy. Stiffikits of character should be required, with hevery bull I purchased. Sweetness and forbearingness of disposition, hindispensable. As regards the question of Mr Thicknesse, I had ascertained that, although sows were freely used in small commercial transactions, it was not necessary to hexport your whole stock, there being a coin of similar name, which might be used, instead. In conclusion, I thanked them all 'eartily, and moved a vote of thanks to Mr Dumbush, for his hable silence in the chair.

Folks going to France a'most hevery day—I needn't say more than that we found heverybody wery polite, and partial to franks—and it were only when we got to a place, hoddly called 'Buy on,' and hentered Spain, that our troubles began. We had just cut in for one of those half-yearly rebellions I

have mentioned. This, however, was more seriouser than common. The queen had bolted for good and all, without 'aving 'ad time to put on her crown. That was why they'd turned her topsy-turvy on my letter. Great hexcitement was wisible, 'specially when we stopped to dine, and was only given three minutes and a half. Heverybody was talkin' of 'freedom' and 'liberty'—and wery free they was—and great liberties took with Mrs Hel's baggage—searching heverything, even to shaking out her chemises. I see them busy over a bundle of her curlpapers (which was old farm-accounts of mine) and there was a power of talking and comparing, before they was hultimately put back. A gentleman as spoke English told me they was suspected of being 'Carlist dockyments.'

Heverything, as we approached Sairey Gosser, seemed to get dearer and dearer, which, the same gent assured us, was another glorious sign o' freedom.

At Sairey Gosser, Tom Tirritup met us at the station, stopped a gineral fight for our luggage, and, elbowing right and left, got us safely away to a wery fine hotel—the 'Horiental.' Our coachman, bein' free, wanted ten franks, to which request Tom merely replied, 'Caramba!' and gave him *two*. We had a hexlent supper, and Tom said he had selected that hotel for us, because the waiters, though Spanish, spoke Italian, which was a great conwvenience and satisfaction!



My wife, being tired, went to bed, when Tom perjuiced some wery choice tobacco, smuggled (through a hamicable arrangement with a gentleman at the Custom-house) by Ramirez Vermijo, and opened his budget. There was to be a wery great cattle show on the morrow, patronized by the provisional government, in horder to amuse the people while they was making choice among the fifteen gentlemen who had kindly offered to be king. With regard to the black Handalusian bull I had chiefly come to see, Tom reported that he was in the best of health, and—not having been fed for two days—would be hactive and hirritable on the morrow, and so be seen to the greater advantage.

This sounded hodd ; but, not to show ignorance, I honly nodded, and made a secret resolution not to go near that noble hanimal till he had dined.

Tom ended a long discourse on the hinteresting character of Spanish bulls, with the remark that, if he could honly command the sum of one thousand pounds, he distinctly saw his way to making it twenty. At this point of the conversation, however, I got wery sleepy, and we presently separated for the night.

Sairey Gosser is the bawlingest town I hever know'd. Shouting and singing went on till half-past three. Then there was quiet for half an hour ; after which began a jingling of bells up and down the streets, stopping at different houses. This, they told us afterwards, meant hasses' milk, which, at

four in the morning, must have been a wery pleasant and invigorating tippie.

Heverything was alive the next morning, for the cattle show was to hopen at twelve o'clock, and all Sairey Gosser, women-folks and all, was going. Tom Tirritup came to breakfast, and brought a request from Ramirez Vermijo that I would place him (Ramirez V.) at the feet of Mrs Hel; but, me hobjecting, Tom explained that it was honly another form o' compliment.

Rayther to my surprise, Tom did not wish Mrs Hel to accompany us, stating that, owing to the huneven temper of bulls, and to hosses gittin' in the way, haccidents of a serious natur' were not unusual. My missis, however, p'inted out that she had not come all that way to be left alone; also that her nerves was good, and that, by taking with her some salts and sticking-plaster, she might be wery useful in case of need. So Tom called a coach, and hoff we went.


The streets leading to the show was one tremenjious jam. Such a lot of carriage company I never see! Such a floating o' weils and fluttering o' fans! Such a capering of hosses and whiffing of paper cigars! Such gineral hexcitement as must have been wery gratifying to the feelins of the stock we was coming to examine, if they could honly have know'd it in time!

At last we entered the building, and was placed in what Tom said were hexlent seats, reserved for us



by Ramirez Vermijo. But wheer was the pens? There wasn't a livin' creature wisible, honly about ten thousand people, hoccupying seats or walking about in a sanded harea below. Tom, however, explained that the beasts was hexhibited one at a time; and, on my remarking that, unless I was allowed to feel and closely hinspect the warious animals, I couldn't hoffer an opinion as was worth anything, Tom merely rejined, that both he and Ramirez Vermijo would take it as a favour that I should do so, as hoften as I saw fit.

Hall on a sudden, a gate was flung open below. The people as was walking about himmediately got over the double rails that went round the place, and took their seats. Then a percession hentered the harea. Fust came four trumpeters, in beautiful hold-fashioned dresses, with flags 'anging to their hstruments; then a gent in a wery tight rich dress, blue and gold, 'aving a sword in his right hand, and hover his left arm a large red silk 'ankerchief. ('The mattydoor,' said Tom, in my ear. 'Ho,' says I, winking.) Hafter the mattydoor (which was applauded, and bowed back) come six men on horseback—if 'osses they might be called—for I wouldn't have given ten pound for the lot. The men was all padded down their right sides, as if they'd broke their right ribs, including the thigh and leg, and was in splints, according, and carried pikes hornamented with ribbins. ('Pickadoors,' whispered Tom. 'O, *doos* they,' says I.) Next



there come eight or ten men in smart jackets, sashes, and knee-breeches, with little spikes in their hands, likewise with ribbins; and, lastly, a string o' ten mules, 'arnessed, but not droring anything, and a'most covered with silver and ribbins. It was altogether a wery pretty sight, and Mrs Hel applauded 'eartily.

When they had marched all round the circle, a gent in a bright uniform, wery well mounted, pranced into the ring, stopped in front of the largest box, made a speech in Spanish, and 'eld out his hat, into which a gentleman, which, Tom said, was the governor, threw a big key, hornamented with the he-verlasting ribbins. This the mounted gent 'anded to an attendant on foot, who went and hopened another door, and popped be'ind it, while everybody else got out of the way as quickly as they could.

Pwish!—Wot a bound!—There was a cloud of sand and dust, which dispersed, and showed a bull—hash-gray in color, with short but sharp horns, p'inting well forrard, on each side of a head that seemed good half a yard across, and covered with short thick curling 'air. His eyes glowed like danger-signals on a railway-line—he lashed hisself with his tail, and tore deep trenches in the sile, as if he was diggin' a grave for the fust as should cross his way!

Mrs Hel and me was still admiring that finely-deweloped beast, when two of the men in splints, mounted on the valuable hosses, rode right into the



ring, hopped the bull, and stood stock still, with their pikes pointing towards him. At first, he didn't notice them, being interested in the ladies' fans, which fluttered like a thousand pigeons. I had just time to whisper, 'Bless my soul, Tom, do they *want* to aggravate him?' and Tom to answer, coolly, 'Shouldn't wonder,' when—broosh!—the bull was upon the nearest! The man caught him in the shoulder with his pike, but the horse, seemingly groggy, reeled so that I thought both was over. There was a burst of applause, in the midst of which my wife huttered a little shriek—and turned pale.

'The blood! The blood! The poor dumb creature! why does they provoke him then?'


'Hush, hush, my dear cousin!' said Tom, 'astily. 'It don't go in fur. See how the hother ladies enjoys it?'

And, be ashamed to them, so they did!

By this time the bull had wriggled himself off the pike, and, mad with pain and hanger, made a furious dash at the second horseman, which received him in the same way.

'Tom, Tom, do you call this a cattle show?' said my wife, faintly. 'I call it a cruel, wicked, wanton——'

'Well, it brings out their best qualities, you see,' says Tom, lighting a cigarette; 'we judges o' the soundness o' the stock by the way they bears themselves under trying circumstances — Ha! — Bravo, Toro!'



‘Bravo, Toro!’ shouted thousands o’ voices.

The bull, shaking hisself clear, had charged like lightning on the man’s undefended side. There lay on the ground a shapeless heap, composed of man and horse, a mass of blood, and, more shocking still, the entrails of the fallen quadruped, smoking on the sand.

‘Take me out, Hel,’ gasped my wife, ‘or I shall die!’

Tom and I removed her quickly into the air, and, the faintness passing, put her into a carriage. I was stepping in, too, but the good soul whispered me that it would ’ardly be the right thing to leave Tom alone. So, hafter seeing her comfortably hoff, back I went with Tom.

There was more hexcitement than hever. You’ll ’ardly believe it—but, in that short time, the bull nad killed three more hosses, and hinjured a man—and was raging about the enclosure, shaking the blood in showers from his horns and head. Many of the ladies was half standing, waving their fans, and hurraying like the men. For myself, wexed as I was at the trick Tom had played us, I hown I was not free from the prewailing hexcitement—so, speaking coldly, I says:

‘Wotever may be my priwate opinion of your *cattle show*—Mr Tirritup—I consider that, bein’ here, it is my dooty to see it hout—if honly in the hope that something may occur to halter my present impression.’

‘All right, old fellow,’ says Tom. ‘See!’

Just at that moment, a trumpet sounded, and several of the men with the ribbined spikes ran into the enclosure, and began dancing about the bull, teasing and hirritating him, leaving their spikes fixed in his neck; but halways saving their own skins in a wonderful way.

‘They know, you see,’ says Tom, ‘by the prick of his ear, which side he’s goin’ to charge, and sticks him on the t’other.’

At last, one man brought a chair, and sat hisself down in it as coolly as if he was goin’ to have a quiet chat with the bull. He had in each hand a spike, to which was fastened a sort of cracker. Down goes the bull’s tremenjious head, and he rushes at the sitting man. Hup goes the chair, twenty feet in the hair; but the man stands by, laughing, and on each side of the poor beast’s head are stuck the spikes, spattering fire! There was more tricks and teasing, such as ‘anging their ‘ats on the bull’s horns, hex-cetera, but the hanimal got tired o’ fighting nothing, and there was a pause, when the trumpet sounded again, heverybody bolted, and henter the mattydoor, glistening like a ‘arlequin. There was a roar of applause.

“‘Hel Tato” is deservedly pop’lar,’ remarked Tom, ‘‘aving polished off his four hundred bulls with only one mistake.’


‘Hel Tato’ walks straight towards the bull, which glares at him a moment with his red eyes,

then, using all his remaining strength, makes a furious, stumbling charge. There's the whish of a scarlet mantle—the glitter of a sword—a cloud of dust, and the beast is on his knees and broad forehead, at the feet of 'Hel Tato,' dead. 'Twas the only manly stroke he had received, and was rewarded with a 'urricane of applause, 'andfuls of money, and cigars enough to fill a barrow to the brim. Three mules then come dashing in at full gallop, was hitched to the bull, and whirled him off, as if he had been made o' pasteboard! Hafter that, the place was put to rights, the ladies ate oranges, and hother bulls was perjuiced. But I had had enough of Rammyres Vermijo, and Tom laughed, and said, so had *he*.

We walks away silent, when presently Tom—whose cigarette didn't seem to draw kindly—looks sideways at me, and says :

'You're disappointed, Lufkin!'

'Disappointed!' I bust out. 'Say, hindignant. Hadd, ashamed! I've given countenance to a exhibition as hatrocious as it is cowardly. I've dishonoured the name and character of the British farmer. 'Owever I shall 'old up my 'ead again, at the Salutation, I don't know. I shall blush to look my hown bulls in the face—when I think of the hend o' this one! You bring him up, from his free pastures—the brave, hunsuspectin' beast, and the use you make of his might and strength—his noble lines—his splendid dewelopment of limb and muscle—his glorious crest—his more than manly



courage—is to turn him into a railed prison, theer to be prodded with pikes, scorched with fireworks, bullied, baited, and bewildered, until, blind and weak with loss of blood, he can be safely cut down by that mixture o' the monkey and the murderer you call a "mattydoor!" Aye, Tom, if the beast could speak, that would be *his* version o' the sport. Hout upon such sport! It hasn't even the merit of being dangerous. Between your harmour, hosses, cloaks, squibs, noise, and numbers, its fifty to one agin the single hanimal, before hever he henters the ring.

'And, if it's cruel to the bulls, it's worse for the hosses. They can't defend theirselves, and their riders, padded as they are, think honly of their own carcasses.*

'And if it's cruel to the hosses—oh Tom, Tom, it's worst cruelty of all to the women! Yes, them that flutters and fidgets most, in that 'orrible joy, bears deadliest witness against man's misleading. Hour duty is, and ever was, to restrain that spirit, heager, curious, hexcitable, that seems the 'eritage of the weak but dear companion God has given us. Is it in this Christian age and land, that we are

* Mr Lufkin's comment—correct in the main—has found an honourable exception in the person of Calderon, at present the first picador in Spain. This man occasionally rides an old white horse, perfectly blind, which he has succeeded in bringing in safety, almost without a scratch, from thirty desperate encounters. By the laws of the bull-ring, a horse that escapes in safety, from three conflicts, becomes the property of the rider.

found doing our hutmost to encourage it? No, Tom, my boy, instead of fostering in her the savage thirst of blood, show her those inevitable sufferings with which her gentle heart can sympathize, and which her tender hand can soothe. As for your hosses, instead of tearing out their hinsides, fill 'em with 'olesome food. And as for your beef, when it can't fulfil no nobler hend, why, cook it like a man, and hask *me* to dinner!'





THE TRYST IN TWIN-TREE LANE.

AT midnight between the ninth and tenth of May, 18—(it is less than thirty-five years ago), there occurred a meeting which, whether for the incongruity of its constituent elements, the difficulties with which it was encompassed, its gloom and mystery, or its actual purpose, has, to the best of the writer's belief, no parallel in social history.

During the period that has since elapsed, many minor particulars have come to light, and supplied the materials for as circumstantial a narrative of this singular transaction as the most curious inquirer could desire.

On the evening of the eighth of May, that is, the day preceding the incident about to be related, the 'family of Mr Newton Horsfall, of Cowling Priors, Herts, noticed something unusual in that gentleman's demeanour.

Mr Horsfall was the representative of an old and loyal county family. Though of somewhat quiet


and retiring habits, he was an active county magistrate, and, the previous year, had served the office of high sheriff. Aged, at this period, about forty-eight, he had married seven years before a lady twenty years his junior, by whom he had a son and daughter.

At dinner, on the day above mentioned, Mr Horsfall's disturbance seemed to increase. He ate but little, was silent and abstracted, and, contrary to his wont, appeared relieved when his wife's departure left him to his own meditations. He moved restlessly in his chair, got up and paced the room, and, finally, sitting down at a bureau that stood in a corner of the room, fell to examine some papers he selected from its contents. These he divided into two portions, one of which he tore up to the minutest particles, the other he placed under seal and restored to its former place. It was known at an after-period that he had also opened and reperused his will.

This done, he rested his head on both hands and resumed his anxious meditations. Suddenly he spoke aloud.

'I will—yes, I will do it. Yes, come what may, the reproach of being absent shall not attach alone to *me*. Let danger, let what is worse, ridicule, attend this proceeding, I am of a race that keep their faith, and——'

'Newton!' said a gentle voice, and a white hand glistened on his shoulder. 'I have not been your wife for seven years,' resumed Mrs Horsfall, 'with-



out learning to read your face. You have a trouble, dear; the first, I hope and believe, you have not permitted me to share. Forgive my eavesdropping. My anxiety was intolerable. What has happened?’

Mr Horsfall smiled.

‘Happened, my love? Nothing, nothing in the world. The worst is—the very worst is, that—that—I must leave you for some thirty-six hours, and that, unfortunately, this very night.’

‘To-night!’

‘I understand your consternation, my dear,’ said her husband, trying to speak lightly; ‘we have people to dinner to-morrow, and unless they would consent to wait till six in the morning, my Lucy must be host and hostess too.’

‘Oh, Newton, it is impossible!’

‘Try.’

‘But will you tell me nothing more?’

‘Every word, dear; but not *now*.’

‘Newton, I have a petition to make to you.’

‘Speak it, love.’

‘Take me with you.’

‘Not if—ahem—my dear, it is impossible,’ said the magistrate. ‘You must remain to receive our friends, and assure them that nothing short of business that would not brook an hour’s delay, compelled me to be absent from my post. Now, if you love me, not another question. Ring the bell, like a sensible woman, and order the carriage at four.’

‘Four in the morning?’ ejaculated Mrs Horsfall, faintly, and burst into tears.

‘The idea is terrible,’ said the magistrate, smiling; ‘but take courage. Duty calls.’

‘May I go with you part of the way?’

‘To London? Certainly, if you wish it. *All* the way.’

It was not in his very gentlest accents that Jacob Gould, the coachman, acquainted his pampered horses with the astounding fact that they were required to turn out of their comfortable nests, as he himself had done, at four in the morning. As for Mr Horsfall himself, now that he had apparently resolved upon his course of action, he grew more cheerful, and jested gaily with his wife as he put her into the carriage. At the top of Regent-street he stopped the carriage and beckoned to a hackney coach.

‘God bless you, my love!’ he cried, leaning from the window; and, adding a word of direction to the driver, was jolted away.

‘*Where* did your master say, Robert?’ asked Mrs Horsfall.

‘Whyto’seller, Piccadilly, ’m,’ retorted Robert, with a slight cough, meant to intimate that travelling so early did not agree with him.

‘I will alight here also,’ said Mrs Horsfall. ‘Let the carriage be put up for an hour or two. You and Jacob get some breakfast, then return home, and see that the letters I have left be de-

livered immediately. I shall not be back till to-morrow, with your master. Call that coach.'

'Piccadilly' was the direction she gave, but, stopping the coach in a minute or two, she asked the driver what was the White Horse Cellar.

'Place wheer the Brighton coaches plies from,' was the answer.

'Drive to the Elephant and Castle,' said Mrs Horsfall, 'and be quick.'

'Is there a Brighton coach about to start?' Mrs Horsfall inquired, eagerly, as they mingled with the mass of coaches which, at that period, congregated round the well-known hostel.

'Yes, 'm, the Age, in a moment. One inside!' telegraphed a porter to the Brighton driver, who nodded.

Mrs Horsfall was in her place in a moment, and whisking along through Tooting, half an hour ahead of her husband, supposing, indeed, he had taken that road. But she was far from content with herself. Twenty times, during the journey, she wished the step untaken. As often she succeeded in persuading herself that her disobedience was pardonable, and preferable, whatever its consequence, to the anxiety she would have had to endure; for that her husband was bound on an expedition of danger, she entertained no manner of doubt.

It was a period of discontent, and much uneasiness. From causes not necessary here to recall, the working classes in several counties had allowed

themselves to be moved to serious outrage. Incendiarism was the order of the day, or night, and it was no uncommon thing to see the horizon lit up in twenty places with the fires that guilty hands had kindled. Everywhere there was a vague apprehension of a visit from the 'mob,' which noun of multitude was supposed to be prowling about, burning and pillaging the houses of the rich, and, in more than one instance, justifying the fear. Mrs Horsfall trembled, as it occurred to her that her husband's excursion was connected with the repression of these disturbances.

She had resolved upon her course of action ; and, accordingly, quitted the coach at a small hotel at the very entrance of Brighton, at which most of the coaches halted for a moment. Here she obtained an apartment facing the road, and, shrouded in the curtains, set herself to scrutinize the passengers of each vehicle, as they successively arrived.

The vigil was tedious, but, at six o'clock, her patience was rewarded. As the Red Rover dashed up to the door, the familiar face was discernible at the coachman's side.

Mrs Horsfall had concluded that he would certainly go on to Castle-square, and had prepared herself to step into a fly, and follow. To her astonishment, however, if not alarm, he quietly descended, obtained his valise, and entered the same modest hostel in which his wife had already taken refuge.

In the course of the evening, Mrs Horsfall, by



skilful inquiry, contrived to learn that the magistrate had dined, by himself, in the coffee-room, had subsequently smoked a cigar, and, that finished, gone to the play!

‘To the——’ Mrs Horsfall had some difficulty in checking her ejaculation of surprise.

But the gentleman would return at eleven; only the porter was not to go to bed, as he was going out again, and might be absent some hours.

Mrs Horsfall’s heart gave a throb.

‘*That is it, then,*’ she murmured, and sunk into trembling meditation. In this condition we must leave her, and repair to another part of the country.

Doctor S., who at this time presided over an important inland diocese, and was in the prime of intellectual, if not physical life, was a man who never spared himself in his Master’s service. It was therefore an unmistakable token of overtaxed energies, when the bishop, sinking into his chair, on the evening of the seventh of May, acknowledged that a brief respite from labour would not be unacceptable to him. His wife caught at the idea. For the last few days, a sort of harassed look, not habitual with him, had attracted her attention. He wanted rest.

‘How I wish, my dear,’ said Mrs S., ‘that you could escape, if it were but for four or five days, from *all* hard work! Now I really think that, with the assistance you can command, and——’

‘My dear, you anticipate my thought,’ the good bishop replied. ‘Nothing would recruit me more

effectually than a fair three days' holiday, exclusive of the travelling ; a little unfatiguing journey, some whither—say, towards the sea. I ought, yes, certainly, I ought to do it,' he added, half to himself.

'*That* you ought!' exclaimed his wife, triumphantly. 'I shall order William to prepare your things, so that, if you please, we can leave this very day.'

'Gently, gently, my dear,' said the bishop. "'*We!*" nay, nay ; I must not take all my comforts with me, and expect to find health to boot. It is enough that I find rest, and—and change. I shall make my little expedition entirely alone.'

'*Alone!*' echoed Mrs S. 'My dear, I shall be so nervous.'

'On behalf of which of us, my love?' inquired the bishop, laughing. 'Come, come, the dangers of the highway are reduced to a minimum. As regards the perils of damp sheets and doubtful fare, I can make your mind easy. I shall ask the hospitality of my cousin, Anna Meadows, at their pretty place near Brighton, and occupy the bachelor's room.'

'At least, you will take Charles?'

(Charles was the bishop's nephew, his chaplain and secretary.)

The bishop hesitated. It was clear he purposed to have gone alone, but his wife's tone of entreaty prevailed. Moreover, he was very fond of his nephew.

'Well, well, Charles shall go.'



They set off that day, and the next, May the eighth, saw them, to the delight of their amiable host and hostess, comfortably established at Park-hurst Dene. Mrs Meadows was, indeed, a little disappointed next morning, when her right reverend guest announced, with some reluctance, that a business engagement of a pressing nature would compel him to absent himself for that evening and night, but that he would return early on the morrow. Except that his destination was Brighton, the bishop added no further particulars, and, the distance being but eight miles, the carriage was not ordered till four o'clock, at which time, accompanied by his nephew, he took his departure. He had made a feeble effort to shake off this faithful companion, but Charles had laughingly reminded him of the promise his aunt had exacted from him, not to lose sight of the bishop till the latter returned in safety. So the prelate had given way.

During the drive, their conversation turned upon the state of the agricultural districts. There had been some threatening of disturbance, and several incendiary fires visible from Brighton, but the presence of a large cavalry force at the latter place kept the fashionable folks entirely at their ease, as regarded a visit from the 'mob.'

After passing through the village of Portslade, the bishop began to scrutinize the locality with keen interest.

'Here are spots,' he observed, 'in which escape

or concealment would not be difficult for these misguided persons, should these ample rick-yards tempt them to fresh crime. We are approaching a still more broken—— My friend,' added the bishop, taking advantage of the carriage walking up a hill to accost a rustic who was at hand, 'do you know Coldstone Bottom—and—and Twin-Tree Lane?'


'I 'low I do,' said the man, 'whereby I've lived at Coldstone better nor twenty years. 'Tother's to the left, handy.'

For the remainder of the drive the bishop was silent and meditative. They were quickly in Brighton, when the bishop drove to the York Hotel, dismissed the carriage, and ordered apartments.

'We will dine together, Charles, at seven,' he said to his nephew; 'the evening is at your own disposal, for my work, which may possibly detain me to a late hour, admits of no assistance or interference.'

There was an emphasis on the latter words that forbade remonstrance. But the Reverend Charles Lileham was sensible of an undefined anxiety which induced him to resolve that, happen what would, he must not let his honoured relative wander far from his sight. It was a little before eleven when the bishop, suddenly rising, put on his great-coat, took his hat and stick, and affectionately pressing his nephew's hand, walked quietly forth alone.

That night, the ninth of May, was a festival one at Brighton. A gentleman of the highest distinction, in his line, was receiving the compliment of what



might be justly called a 'public' dinner, inasmuch as it was held at the Clenched Fists, Birdcage-lane, North-street, and was open to any gentleman interested in the matter to the amount of three-and-sixpence, liquors not included.


It was well attended, for Mr William Beekes, far better known as the 'Bradford Dumpling,' retired champion of England, was the son of a much-respected yeoman farmer in the vicinity, and, though making Bradford the city of his adoption, had never forgotten the peaceful village that gave him birth. The heads he had punched in youth were, like his own, tinged with gray—for the Dumpling had attained the (for the ring) patriarchal age of forty-five—but his visits were hailed with undiminished enthusiasm, and, moreover, this ninth of May was the anniversary of the last great triumph of his professional career.

The festivities were prolonged to a late hour. At that disturbed period it was felt that the usual loyal toasts should be received with double honours, if not with double draughts, and it was past ten o'clock before the chairman arrived at the great toast of the evening.

A song (patriotic), and another (pugilistic), with choruses to both, wound up the evening; when, as closing time approached, it was proposed to escort the ex-champion to his private residence in Burr-alley, West-street, give him three cheers, and dismiss him to his slumbers. But to this little attention the

Dumpling opposed a strenuous opposition. He preferred walking home quietly, alone and unrecognized, indeed he was *not* going home, leastways, not yet. He had an engagement beyond the town, Patcham way, and it was near upon the time. To the playful comment of one of his friends that it was a 'rum start,' the Dumpling merely responded with a wink. To another, a little fluttered with drink, who affectionately insisted upon bearing him company whithersoever he was bound, the Dumpling offered just sufficient personal violence to disable him from doing anything of the sort, and, having at length shaken off his friends, strode away. It was at this time nearly half-past eleven.

The same evening Colonel Spurrier, commanding the gallant Hussar regiment at that time occupying Brighton barracks, had dined at the mess. The circumstance was not of frequent occurrence, the colonel being a married man, and having a house in Brunswick-square. During the meal a letter, bearing the police official seal, was delivered to him. The colonel read it with a serious look, but not till later in the evening did he communicate the contents to the officers present. It seemed that the authorities had been warned of the probability of a meeting of the chief promoters of discontent, at some spot near Brighton, and, fearing that the ordinary civil force might prove insufficient to effect the capture, the magistrates requested that a small military detachment might be held in readiness to act in case of need.



The colonel supplemented his information by issuing the necessary directions, and added that he should himself sleep in barracks that night, although, for the next two hours at least, he must unavoidably be absent.

‘Perhaps,’ he added, smiling, as he threw on a cloak and lit his cigar, ‘I may bring back some information of the enemy’s movements. I am not going into the town.’

‘Permit me, sir,’ said the young adjutant, ‘to recommend you not to go entirely unarmed. Your face is known, and if these lurking rascals are in earnest——’

‘Well, well; lend me your pistols, Baird,’ said the colonel, and, thrusting them into his pocket, walked away.


The clock struck eleven as the sentry at the gate saw the colonel suddenly quit the high road, and strike across the rising grounds in rear of the barracks.

Another event of some interest had signalized this especial evening, the ninth of May, at Brighton. That admirable comedian, Mr L., had wound up a starring engagement of six nights, with a benefit that attracted nearly all the play-going world of that gay watering-place. He had acted in three pieces with unsurpassable humour, marked, however, as the night drew on, with a haste and excitement unusual with him, and which did not escape the notice of his fellow-performers. He was perpetually

glancing at his watch ; fell into quite a passion at a trifling delay between the second and last pieces ; ordered a fly to be in waiting at the stage-door, and, the moment the curtain fell (it was then full half-past eleven), threw himself, dressed as he was, into the vehicle, and, calling out 'Patcham ! quick !' drove furiously away, disregarding the very treasurer, who, with his hands full of notes and gold, stood prepared to settle accounts with the fortunate star, in order that the latter might start, as he proposed, early on the morrow.

The traveller who passes old Brighton church, and, crossing the top of the hill, takes a by-path on the right, leading in the direction of Patcham, would, thirty years ago, have traced the windings of a very pretty rural lane, bordered on the one hand by beech and chesnut trees, on the other by a high bank, beyond which corn-fields stretched away in the direction of the Dyke downs. Half way down the lane, the path, widening for a few yards, left room for a rude seat, which was under the immediate shelter and protection of two large beech-trees, so precisely similar in shape and size, as to have imparted to the path in question the title of Twin-Tree Lane. It was, at the time of which we speak, a sequestered place enough, and was approachable alike from the high road through Patcham, and from that which crosses the Old Church-hill.

It was a few minutes only short of midnight, on the eventful ninth of May, that a lady, muffled in a



cloak and hood, stopped her carriage at the entrance of Patcham, and, desiring the driver to await her return, struck across the fields to the left. The night was fair and still ; with occasional bursts of radiance, as the moon struggled from one blue-black cloud-bank to another.

Whenever this occurred the lonely wanderer strained her eyes to the utmost, as if in search of some receding object, but seemingly in vain.

At last she paused, and gave a sudden sniff.

‘Thank heaven!’ she exclaimed, clasping her hands in real thankfulness. ‘That is his pipe! I should know it among a thousand. He must be close before me.’

In effect, she fancied she could discern her husband’s form not far in advance, and, shrinking closer into the shadow of the hedge, she continued to follow him. At the mouth of what was apparently a wooded lane, the guiding shape suddenly disappeared! Mrs Horsfall hurried forward, and, pausing to listen, thought she could now hear both the step and voice of her husband. He was passing up the lane, evidently with one or more persons, but with little thought of danger, for she heard his frank laugh ring through the quiet air.

‘If they should have betrayed him into some ambush!’ thought the anxious wife. ‘He is so unsuspecting!’

The party a-head seemed to make a sudden halt. Instinctively, Mrs Horsfall shrank toward the border

of trees, and, in doing so, almost came in contact with a man who was stepping from them. Fortunately, she did not cry out, and the manner, unmistakably gentlemanly, in which the stranger tendered his apologies, at once disarmed her fears. He looked at her, however, with a little astonishment, hesitated, then, as if a thought had struck him, said :

‘Is it possible, pray forgive me, that we are here on a similar errand? My name is Lileham, Charles Lileham, a minister of the Church.’

‘Mine is Horsfall,’ said the lady, quickly. ‘I—I am in some anxiety about my husband, who is just before us, in company with I know not what dangerous and desperate men. Oh, what shall we do?’


‘For the inoffensive character of *one*, at least, of his companions, I am prepared to answer,’ said the young clergyman, with a smile. ‘It is the Bishop of L., my uncle.’

‘The bishop!’

‘Of his business here at this hour, I am as completely ignorant as you apparently are of Mr Horsfall’s. I fear I am transgressing his wishes in following him thus closely.’

‘Hark! There are more voices!’ exclaimed Mrs Horsfall. ‘They seem raised in anger.’

‘In amusement, rather, if I mistake not,’ said Mr Lileham. ‘But come: if you will accept my guidance, you shall see what is passing. They have assembled under those two large trees. Will you permit me to show you the way?’



Mrs Horsfall assented. In less than ten minutes they had reached the point indicated by Mr Lileham. A bright stream of moonlight was pouring right into the recess canopied by the twin trees, and made the singular party therein assembled distinctly visible. It was composed of five individuals, seated on the curved bench, engaged in earnest and animated discussion. In the centre might be recognized the reverend and stately form of the Bishop of L., immediately on whose right sat the Bradford Dumpling, supported in his turn by Mr Newton Horsfall, of Cowling Priors, Herts. On the left of the prelate might be seen the familiar, mirth-awakening lineaments of Mr L., the celebrated low comedian, flanked by the commanding presence of Colonel Reginald Spurrier, of the —th Hussars.

The subject of their conversation was manifestly of the deepest interest. Of what could they possibly be talking? And why—oh, why this mystery? Mrs Horsfall saw that her companion was as puzzled as herself, and that his countenance had become very serious indeed.

Suddenly they saw the colonel start to his feet. A horse-tramp approached from below, and his quick ear had been the first to catch the sound.

‘I fear we are suspected,’ he said aloud. ‘Listen. I thought so. They are upon us from both sides!’

And in truth, next moment, an armed horse-patrol rode in from either side, and halted in the front of the party beneath the trees.

‘Pleasant night, gentlemen,’ said the first patrol. ‘Curious time, though, to be sittin’ here, ain’t it?’

Mr Horsfall conceded, in the name of himself and friends, that it *might* seem a curious time, but inquired what business that was of the officer’s?

‘My business is to obey orders, that’s all,’ replied the man. ‘And one of ’em is to perwent any gatherings at night we don’t know the meaning of. It’s our duty, gentlemen, to demand your names and ockipations, preparatory to requesting you to move on.’

‘The man is right,’ said the bishop. ‘I could have wished it otherwise, but the fault is our own. My friend, I am a churchman. My name is S., Doctor S., Bishop of L.’

‘Wery likely,’ was the reply. ‘And this here gent’ (pointing to the Dumpling), ‘he’s the Lord Mayor of London, I suppose?’

‘Come, my man, you are mistaken,’ said Colonel Spurrier, striding out into the full moonlight. ‘If you are unacquainted with the face of the reverend gentleman, perhaps you know mine?’

He took off his hat.

‘Colonel Spurrier!’ cried the men, saluting.

‘This is Mr Horsfall, a magistrate of Hertfordshire,’ resumed the colonel. ‘My other two friends are already known to you.’

‘I beg your pardon, gentlemen,’ said the patrol. ‘There was notice give, you see, of a hillegal meeting to-night, near Brighton, and seeing parties

pinting this way, we thought we was down upon 'em. Whatever *you* was adoin'g here's best known to yourselves.'

'Stay,' said the bishop; 'I feel that some fuller explanation is needed. Whatever jesting comments our meeting may provoke, I for one am content to bear them, for the pleasure it has afforded me. Have I your permission, gentlemen, to state the facts?'

Every one consenting, the bishop continued :

'We five whom you find assembled here, were in early youth schoolmates at an establishment situated at no great distance from the spot on which we stand. Twin-Tree Lane, as I find it is still called, was a favourite half-holiday resort. Here we discussed our school affairs, or speculated upon the wide uncertain future that awaited us in the tumult of the world. The death of our excellent master caused the sudden dispersion of the school, and it was on the evening before the general departure, that we five, sitting together under our favourite trees, entered into a solemn agreement to meet, if God permitted, that day *thirty* years, at the same spot at midnight, with the purpose of declaring how Providence had hitherto dealt with us in our several ways of life, and comparing our actual experiences with the brilliant hopes of boyhood.

'So far asunder have our duties separated us (I myself for some years presided over a colonial see, and my friend, Colonel Spurrier, has served in India)

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that for the whole period of thirty years no two of us have ever met together, nor, indeed, so far as I am aware, held communication of any sort. It was a doubt with me whether every member of the party had not long since forgotten this boyish compact. There were also the difficulties that might have arisen, if remembered, in keeping it. But the solemnity with which it was made had left upon my mind, as it did upon others, an abiding impression. My pledge had been given and never withdrawn. I thought of the possibility of one of us, at least, faithful to his word, groping his way hither in the faint hope of grasping an old friend's hand, and finding only darkness and a void. I was altogether wrong and mistrustful; here we are, all five, grateful for many mercies, cordially rejoicing to have met again; and, if our vocations in life have been widely diverse, I may, I think, say with truth, that we have wrought in them with honesty and singleness of purpose, without wrong to any, in thought, word, or deed. You are satisfied, my friends?'

The officers bowed, and apologizing for their interference, prepared to move on.

'Not a word,' said the bishop; 'you have only done your duty. Good-night, and may you meet with no less loyal and peaceable men than you have surprised here.'

'Here are two more watchers to be forgiven,' said a voice familiar to the bishop, as two figures, male and female, suddenly descended into the road,

and Mrs Horsfall, bathed in tears, threw herself into the arms of her astonished husband, while Mr Lileham, in a few words, explained the anxiety which had prompted their pursuit. Anger was out of the question; a general laugh announced that all was forgiven. Only the bishop attempted to frown, and that was a failure.





HIS LITTLE WAYS.

NOTWITHSTANDING that, since the period at which I first accosted the reader in these pages, gray has something mingled with our younger brown, it may not be wholly without interest to the fairer portion of my friends to mention, incidentally, that I am still an unsnared being, a bright old bachelor, still faithful to my principles of freedom, still, with the combined decision and courtesy with which one honours, and repels, the efforts of a persevering foe, resisting eligible opportunities of parting with that blessing. Urbane, but inexorable, I really know no man who more thoroughly appreciates the charming qualities of the other sex, or cherishes a deeper sentiment of gratitude for the still greater blessings he had sometimes believed them not unwilling to confer. Cordially recognizing the sagacious provision that proposals should proceed from *our* side, I feel that I must else not only have long since exhausted all acknowledged forms of negative, but that the perpetual



demand upon one's best and tenderest sympathies must have seriously affected my nervous system, and terminated in—say sciatica, if nothing worse.

I would not, for worlds, be considered to speak disrespectfully of the married state. Very, very far from it. I have a positive predilection for matrimonial life, provided I do not share it, and look round upon the ever-increasing circle of its victims with something of that feeling, mournful, indeed, yet tender and humanizing, with which one gazes on the sick and wounded in some mighty hospital.


I have even a little gallery in my house, sacred to their manes. Under each sad-eyed portrait, with its forced, quivering smile, and, not unfrequently, that 'tamed' look never seen in cage-born animals of the fiercer kind, appears the date of the unfortunate fellow's birth and exec—marriage, I mean—and I am sensible of few things more gratifying than to sit, smoking (poor lads! *you* never smoked) in your midst, to remember that if you fell easily, you bore it nobly, and to think that, but for a too ostentatious embracing of your chains, you might have passed for happy men.

One of you (yes, Balaam Burkemyoung, b. 1687, m. 1715, you may well try to disarm me with that deprecating gaze), carried hypocrisy to the extent of marrying three wives! Of the first, history is mute. Between the two last, you lie buried. In the interesting bas-relief commemorating that circumstance, you are turning your back to the one, and bestowing

your undivided attention on the other. Balaam, this is suggestive. Is it—can it be two to one that you were not a happy spouse?


Charley Wing, dear old boy, your wink is a transparent humbug. It is not worth one dump. That look, recalled with difficulty for deceitful ends, belongs to an earlier and happier period of your existence. You had been dead three years (to freedom) when, at the command of your sovereign, Mrs Wing, you smirked for this effigy! My friend, I consecrate this sip of grog to the joyous memories of our bachelorhood. No man was louder in praise of that blest condition than yourself. In the very act of exulting over a fallen brother, whit! your foot slipped, and you vanished over the dizzy precipice, with Sibyl Greatheed of the Grange.

John Adolphus Burkemyoung Parfitt (b. 1789, m. 1830), it is my painful duty to pass upon you the severest sentence in my power to award. Convicted on the clearest evidence, your marriage certificate, of two offences of the highest class—treason, sir, and perjury—forgetful of your own voluntary vow that nothing should induce you to marry, you deserted the ranks of bachelorhood upon the merest provocation. Life's battle, sir, had hardly begun, when you, unhappy man, incited by one Agnes Heckstetter Williamson, of Scarborough, Yorkshire, Spinster, withdrew precipitately to the rear, and were heard of no more. You are hung, sir, well hung (light from the left), and may you be as happy as you don't deserve!



Philip Bamstead (b. 1800, m. much regretted, 1821), tender years recommend to mercy only when accompanied by the weakness and instability incident to youth. You fell in love, young sir, at seventeen. Four years were allotted you for reflection and repentance. In vain. On the day you came of age, you married. Human depravity—I cannot trust myself to speak. A baronet of my acquaintance, Sir Peter Teazle, has sagaciously remarked that certain marriages are crimes that bring their own punishment. You were a grandfather at forty!

And now, Tom Burkemyoung, the younger, ‘What shall I say to *thee*, Lord Scrope?’ Friend of my youth, I knew thee, and that there was, in thy whole composition, not love enough to stir the soul of a flea. Had I been inquired of, by cynic, what man is safe? I should have unhesitatingly replied ‘*Tom. Tom Burkemyoung.*’ To do you justice, however, you practised no deceit or perfidy. The woman does not breathe who shall taunt you with broken vows. Tom lost everything he possessed, and very considerably more, through the sudden dissolution of the Universal Starch and Stucco Company. Comprehending at one glance his position, Tom put himself up for sale. ‘My reserved price,’ avowed the frank, handsome fellow, ‘is two hundred thousand, fifty down.’ He was bought by Mrs Curwig, widow of the eminent broker, the mark of whose honoured head, against his favourite pillar in the Stock Exchange, is still pointed out to new comers with pride and emo-




tion. 'Sic stabat Curwig' was to have been inscribed over the spot he had abandoned for another, where time-bargains are no more, but a brother magnate of the 'Change having declared that he, for one, would not 'stab at' the memory of his old friend, the idea was prudently relinquished. Tom, old boy, health to you, and resignation. I salute you.

After all (this is first-rate 'bacey), after all, my suffering souls, I have not touched upon the worst of your condition. You remind me of the metamorphosed kings in Circe's palace. You were once men. You sank into husbands, from thence you degenerated into sires. In this moral decrepitude, you received the ironical title of 'governor,' your gubernatorial functions being, in many cases, expressly restricted to the forking out of cash.

Your case, my worthy things, is hopeless. Man's growing wisdom has greatly facilitated the cheaply and expeditiously getting rid of wives. But with your offspring the matter is different. The law of England, like a benevolent grandmother, adopts both parties, and, for a certain period, compels the satisfactory fulfilment of those functions you assumed with the honorary title above referred to.

Right you are, my excellent creatures, to adapt yourselves to uncontrollable circumstances; but the forced exultation under which you strive to conceal your disgrace is transparent to the (bachelor) friends who love you. Humbling is it to witness the first feeble efforts of some hero of fifty fields, to control



the struggles of that formless dab of humanity he styles his 'son!' Melancholy, indeed, is the spectacle of a man whose glowing pen has moved the social world, accosting his first-born as topsy-mopsy-wocums! It seems like a grotesque and horrible dream, begotten of German sausage and lager beer, that I once surprised an individual whose poems have been translated into sundry European tongues, entertaining his tyrant-baby with a lyric whose concluding lines are burned into my memory, to this effect:

Shim-sham paradiddle marabona ting-tang—
Rigdum bulladigm ky me.

Tears gather in my eyes as I pen these forgotten words! I will pay one hundred pounds to any individual who will lessen the pang by proving to me that they are susceptible of any rational explanation. 'Ky me' (whatever that may mean) if I will not!

Is it not enough that the dawning reason should be bewildered with such lights as these? Must it be wantonly misled? It is my belief that your baby begins to *think* reason long before its teachers condescend to talk it. *My* infantine common-sense revolted, I remember, against the suggestion that I should hush-a-by on a tree-top, when not only was there a secure and comfortable nursery at hand, but a very serious mishap likely to ensue, were the former proposition adopted.

Again: that 'Burkemyoung' does not rhyme

with 'hunting' I hold to be an insufficient apology for addressing me as 'bunting;' nor does the prospect of being wrapped up in a rabbit-skin offer sufficient attractions to atone for such unfaithful teaching.

Is it imagined that children are born without ears? An error. I knew a young lady who, at four years old, indignantly resisted the attempt in Jack and Jill, to reconcile 'water' and 'after,' and always held to the improved transatlantic reading:

Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And, if Jill didn't—she oughter.

From these, among many examples of a similar nature, I am led to infer that there is something in the care of babies highly debilitating to the intellectual man. Consequently, to delegate the education of this, perhaps inevitable, nuisance, to the sex whose mental progress threatens to become unhealthfully rapid, may be the best for all parties.

I myself have studiously held aloof, and, with one fearful exception, recorded some while since in the pages of 'All the Year Round,' have never, that I wot of, been in direct communication with any baby living. It was, therefore, not without serious mental disturbance that I received a letter from my niece Mattie, married and residing abroad, referring to a rash promise on my part to come and see her first-born son, whenever that astonishing phenomenon should be revealed.

'Aware, dear,' continued this saucy letter, 'of

your partiality for little trots, I have not been in a hurry to remind you of your promise ; but, now, darling Babs is quite a little man ' (he was about two-and-a-half), ' so come you *must*. I do assure you, uncle, he is not a common child.' (If he *had* been, my curiosity would for once have been powerfully excited!) ' He has a hooked nose, like papa, and the richest little baritone voice. His desire to see his godpapa is quite touching.' (This remark merely proves into what extremes the naturally truthful mind may be betrayed by enthusiasm.) ' The moment he heard you were expected ' (So !) ' he began saving up his bits of sugar, and would have been equally generous with regard to his magnesia, but *that* circumstances forbade ! If you could only see him tearing his little cradle curtains—destructive darling, *that* he is ! ' (I could almost hear the kiss that accompanied this tribute.) ' Or screaming and splashing in his little bath ! O dear, dear ! won't you be delighted with his little ways ! '

Ha ! Crumbs of comfort ! My godson's ways were little. If ways of some sort be unavoidable, the smaller they run the better. A hooked nose, ha ? I don't think I ever saw a Jewish baby ; but, with infants of my own persuasion, the little dab of putty which represents the early stage of that organ, simply expresses indecision as to the form it will eventually adopt. Let us, however, hope that the curved beak foreshadows greatness ; at all events, that decision of character and self-control which (see

Julius Cæsar, Arthur, Duke of Wellington, Sir Henry Morgan, the buccaneer, and others) qualify men to be successful *leaders* of men. As touching the quality of my godson's voice, that must, for the present, remain a mystery, a shriek in baritone conveying to my mind no more distinct idea than that of a railway whistle with a cold.

My journey, as luck would have it, was made in company with an interesting young gentleman about my godson's years. There was something contraband, so to speak, in the manner in which he had been introduced into the carriage. At all events, it was only when we were fairly under way, and escape impossible, that he was suddenly born, as it were, from a basket that seemed to contain nothing but innocent lace, and announced his presence with a querulous squall that might have served for a signal to the next station. The pretty little mamma who, with a nurse, occupied the adjacent seats, apologized so sweetly for the—no doubt, to *her*—melodious disturbance, that I felt I could do no less than express myself as rather gratified, than otherwise, at the prospect of our journey being enlivened by such strains.

'You are fond of the pets, if I am not mistaken?' remarked my fair fellow-traveller, archly.

I bowed assent. 'Pet' is a general term, and I have no aversion to a good bull-terrier.


'And I am sure,' she added, more sweetly still, 'they like *you*.'

My heart stood still. A dew rose on my forehead. What if I were expected to caress the little abomination?

‘How he fixes his pretty eyes upon you! It is quite curious, how quickly they recognize their friends!’

If an intense desire to fling its object out of the window be indicative of friendship, I gave this infant credit for its penetration. Snatching the opportunity, when mamma’s eyes were for a moment averted, I returned the child’s stare with a look that might have cowed a rhinoceros. But the result disappointed my expectations. The terrified howl I had elicited was interpreted as a desire to go to the kind gentleman who was smiling so amiably from the opposite seat. This, however, the infant, for its own private reasons, at once declined, thereby enabling me to display, with safety, an amount of disappointment that completely won the confidence of both mamma and nurse.

Upon the whole, this was a fortunate meeting. Here, I thought, was a splendid opportunity of learning a little baby talk and general management which would prove invaluable in defence against my godson. Not to be tedious—before our little party separated, I had, by unwearied observation and a little judicious questioning, acquired all the needful rudiments of babylogy. Although not qualified to maintain a fluent conversation, I felt that I could make myself generally understood. If incompetent



to deal with unforeseen and critical incidents, I could answer for a certain self-possession in the presence of most. In cases demanding prompt action, I felt sure that my course, if somewhat rough, would be effectual. I knew which end of a baby commonly went first, and which had been agreed upon, by nursery sages, as more desirable to keep uppermost. I was aroused to the fact that 'wagh!' (which I had hitherto imagined to be a phrase of the Sioux Indians) was *babine* for hungry: and 'owgh!' implied a slight discomfort in the stomach: these being the only two incidents recognized in earlier baby life, as of any real consequence. The art of saying, 'clk!' 'chirrup!' and 'boh!' at the aptest moment, was one that could not be imparted, but which tact, experience, and observation would soon supply. Finally, the rules that govern dandling and dancing are of so subtle a nature, that the inspiration of the moment is, upon the whole, the safest guide.

Armed with these timely hints, I lost all uneasiness, and by the time I reached my journey's end, was really almost as anxious to meet my godson, as his doting mother could have desired.

'Now, uncle,' said Mattie, composing herself, after the effusions of welcome, 'how would you like to see him, *first*? *Think*, dear, and then say frankly. He does look so pretty, asleep! But, then, his little ways——'

'My dear,' I said, hurriedly, 'if there be one

condition in which a child affects me more pleasingly than another, it is in that sweet repose which must be so unspeakably grateful both to the innocent little being itself, and—and—to all that stand around.'

'Come, then, dear. Hush-sh. Tiptoe, please! *There!*'

Mattie was right. He was *not* a common child. I never saw so 'made' a countenance in so very small a human being. 'Asleep in his cot, his face alone visible, he looked like a medallion of some ancient senator of Rome. His nose, commenced on the principle so much in vogue with that distinguished people, had been finished as a snub. There were purpose and determination in the close-shut lips, and a slight corrugation of the little brows, as if, even in dreams, the atom's thoughts were busy with schemes for the life that was scarcely begun.

'Calculating little beggar!' I thought, smiling, however, with all the sweetness I could command.

'He doesn't take to strangers at all,' whispered Mattie.

'Thank—— no, *really?*' said I, much relieved.

'But don't be uneasy, dear. He will to *you*,' said Mattie, consolingly. 'I do believe he's dreaming of you at this very moment!'

'Come, come, my dear!'

'Just hark.' She put down her ear.

'Don't you see his little lips moving? "Uncle."'

'"Bunkum," I fancied!'

'Nonsense—only hark. "Unky tum!"'

'*Tum!*'

'My own! Uncle *is* tum!' cried the doting mamma, and, in a burst of enthusiasm, she caught him up in her arms.

'Yee-ough!' yelled the child.

I rallied in desperate haste my lately-acquired knowledge.

'Clk!' said I. 'Catchee—that is to say, boh! How d'ye do? And heigh-diddle-diddle.'

'Dear—he's beyond *that*,' said Mattie, laughing merrily. 'Kissy-wissy. Make friends. Talk, my own.' And without a moment's hesitation, she placed him in my unaccustomed arms.

Rather to my surprise, the young gentleman offered no resistance, only making a clutch at a curl on my forehead, which (for reasons of my own) I evaded, compromising for the temporary disuse of my nose.

A little discouraged by the failure of my first conversational efforts, I now resolved to let my godson take the lead, and to adapt the stature of my observations to his. But, whether dumb with joy at his uncle's 'tumming,' or from some occult reason, not one word would he utter. Nevertheless, either the little animal was endowed with a histrionic genius far beyond his years, or he really *was* glad to see me. He smiled, after a grave, controlled fashion, and once executed a deliberate wink, as though to intimate that, when time and inclination should

serve, we might have a good deal to say to one another. Presently he waxed fidgetty, and, wrestling himself down, toddled to his cot, and returned, carrying in his small fists something which he offered to my lips. Prudence dictating a previous examination, there revealed themselves certain substances, whose crumbly and attenuated character, pronounced them, past question, to be half-sucked lumps of sugar!

After this, our friendship ripened fast. He really was an engaging little man, and his odd fancy for his old uncle not a myth at all. Without any vast interchange of ideas, we arrived at a degree of harmony that I should not have imagined possible. Imitation is said to be the most delicate form of flattery, and my godson was never tired of copying my ways. Hence, *his* little ways, hitherto innocuous, became a source of considerable inconvenience, if not worse, and were attended with results quite other than what was intended.

Among the rest of my personal effects that had attracted the young gentleman's notice, perhaps the most beloved was a brightly-decorated Turkish pipe, cut, as I had been at some trouble to explain, from a jasmine tree, a very, very, very long way off! This latter circumstance appeared to give Babs, as he was usually called, some disturbance.

One day the pipe was missing. Great tumult and inquiry. Babs silent and meditative. Next morning the pipe had returned to its accustomed

haunt. Eagerly charging it, I began to inhale the fragrant fumes, when—Pheugh! Whish! Psish! An earwig! Psha! Another! Two! Twenty! Out they came in batches, scampering in every direction! Babs, the secret being too much for his little bosom, burst into tears, and avowed that he had connived at the pipe's passing the night in the heart of a jasmine bush. 'It was such a very, very long way from home.' Babs evidently had a vague idea that the night had been one of festival and welcome for the distant cousin from the Levant!

Growing (as my hairdresser has for thirty years assured me) a little thin on the top of my head, I had, of late, adopted a few supplementary locks, and these, in the intimacy of friendship, I did not hesitate to dress in the presence of Babs. One day I missed both Babs and hair, and proceeding, in some agitation, to the nursery, surprised my young friend busily engaged, with his mother's scissors, in removing the very last curls from Isidor's master-piece.

'Dessing 'oor hair!' cried Babs, triumphantly, waving the denuded scalp before my horror-stricken eyes. He had wished to save me trouble.

My godson was in the habit of paying me early visits in my room. Now, I confess to one unjustifiable propensity, that of smoking in bed; but not conceiving it necessary, at present, to warn my visitor against so evil an example, I puffed away tranquilly, as though he were not there. I shall never forget one terrible morning, when, roused by

violent screams and shouts of 'Fire!' from the upper story, I dashed up-stairs, through a stifling cloud of smoke, to find, happily, poor Babs already rescued, and descending, wrapped in a wet blanket, into the arms of his agonized friends. He had been trying to smoke in bed, but, novice as he was, and embarrassed with the bed-clothes, the result had been limited to fire!

These little misadventures, which, in fact, were only so many proofs of love and confidence, only served to cement our alliance, and my visit was drawing to a most successful close, when coming down one morning, rather late, to breakfast (for I had felt a little indisposed), my niece received me with an exclamation of horror.

'My dear uncle, what *ever* is the matter? Why good heavens! dear, you are *green*?'


'Literally, or figuratively?'

'Don't laugh, dear! *Look*, Harry.' And she burst into tears.

My nephew looked at me gravely, and rang the bell.

'Whether you like it or not, my dear uncle, I shall send for our neighbour, Dr Courtney. The doctor—*instantly*,' he added, to the servant who answered his summons.

In the mean time, I had ascertained that my countenance, throat, and, in fact, as far as I could see, had assumed the colour of a green caterpillar, accidentally boiled.



Dr Courtney was with us, almost before I had completed my self-examination. After a moment, he drew me apart.

‘Do you want the truth?’

‘My dear sir, what *else*?’

‘You’ve been poisoned!’

My heart certainly gave a throb.

‘What have you been swallowing?’

‘Nothing but what, I am grieved to say, every one else has partaken of.’

The physician shook his head, as in doubt of that.

‘Pray go to your room, and to bed. I will be with you again, within a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile, endeavour, I beg of you, to remember everything you have recently taken.’

Feeling myself becoming seriously ill, I obeyed his directions, in all but the last. I could not, however, remember having partaken of anything my friends had *not*.

Dr Courtney quickly returned, and administered such counter-agents as he deemed best.

‘I don’t conceal from you,’ he said, ‘that I am groping somewhat in the dark. The *nature* of the poisonous matter you have swallowed is not revealed by the symptoms with sufficient accuracy. But we will do our best. You are no worse, I find.’

‘I—I don’t know,’ said I, faintly. ‘I think I could sleep a little.’

‘You shall. But first, take this.’

This was something of so nauseous a character,

that I begged for something to remove the flavour.

'Bit o' crockydile!' sobbed Babs, who was crying by the door. 'I fetch it.'

'No, no, my love,' cried Mattie, entering at the moment, 'that would make poor unky worse. It's poison.'

'I eat good bit, whole tail!' cried Babs, exultingly.

Mattie uttered a wild shriek, and caught him in her arms. But at that instant, the nurse entered with the crocodile in question. It was an effigy, in chalk and sugar, of that interesting saurian. The doctor caught it from her, and applied his tongue.

'There's no harm, *here*, my dear lady,' he remarked.

'See, he has licked off all the green, which is a deadly poison,' gasped the mother.

'No, I didn't!' shouted Babs; 'I scrape off pitty green, for unky, and *put it in his beer*.'

'Hurrah!' exclaimed Dr Courtney. 'Then I see my way! All has been done rightly, so far. I know the composition of this filth, and will gage my right hand that we cancel its effects.'

We did so, under Providence, and this was the last time I had to complain of my godson's 'little ways.'



ARDISON AND CO.



THE Island of Sardinia, one of the rare Italian localities hitherto happily exempt from the excitement of political passions, and the disturbing influences which have seldom ceased to trouble the bosom of its continental parent, has recently been startled by the discovery of a moral disease in its domestic life, which will find few parallels in the history of crime.


Most persons who, like the writer, have had opportunities of studying the character and social habits of the island Sards, bear willing testimony to their quiet industry, their calm content, their affectionate disposition, their almost patriarchal practice of the relative duties of host and guest, of master and servant, and, lastly, to their cordial yet not undignified appreciation of interest felt or courtesy expressed by pilgrims from afar.

Petty crimes are of singularly rare occurrence. The prisoners at this moment confined in the gaols of Sassari and Cagliari are almost exclusively im-



portations—not children of the soil—and the prison of the large town of Cagliari has not for two years enclosed a single occupant. When murder has, from time to time, left its stain on these otherwise satisfactory records, it has been usually traceable to no meaner source than the quick and fiery jealousy in all ages a notable characteristic of this people, or to the lingering influence of the deadly ‘vendetta’—inherited blood-feud—which has sacrificed whole families, and once depopulated an entire village for one girl.

There was, years ago, a certain village beauty, whose list of lovers included every disengaged male of the township, and this maiden had three fierce brothers. Now, to salute the lips of a fair lady in public, constitutes an offence which, if not condoned by instant marriage, entails an inevitable ‘vendetta’ upon the families concerned. In order, it seemed, to bring matters to a crisis, the most impatient of the suitors availed himself of a village fête, to salute his beautiful mistress at the head of a procession. He was *not* the favoured one, for the rustic beauty withdrew, without a word, to her father’s house. The friends of the parties, knowing what must ensue, rallied speedily around them; eight lives were lost in the first encounter; and so terrible and comprehensive was the feud, that, after the sacrifice of twenty more lives, the survivors gradually abandoned the village, leaving its ruins visible as a memorial of the most sanguinary vendetta on record.



Widely different in every point of view, though yet more fatal, is the case about to be noticed, the circumstances of which, during a judicial inquiry extending over seventeen days, created the most painful and engrossing interest :

Some few years ago, there appeared at Sassari, the second city of the island, a person of the name of Ardison, who had quitted the beautiful Riviera di Genova to establish himself in Sardinia as an oil-distiller ; purchasing, for the purpose of his trade, the refuse of the olives from the crushing-mills. He was mean and illiterate ; but, being shrewd and persevering in business, succeeded, in an amazingly short period, in amassing a considerable fortune. His example was followed by fresh speculators, and, as another and another distillery shot up in his neighbourhood and prospered, Ardison found his business dwindling into the mere shadow of itself, with the prospect of a still further decline.

Ardison arrived at the diabolical resolution to remove one or more of his competitors by murder. An instrument was at hand. His foreman, Cossa, was a person of such notoriously unscrupulous character, that it is quite possible the sight of these ' means to do ill deeds ' suggested the first step in the bloody journey. Certain is it, that the master having ' faintly broke ' his wishes to the man, found the latter so amenable to argument, and so moderate in his views respecting reward, that it was agreed between them to get rid of—not one, but all the in-

terlopers, at the small charge of twenty pounds English a head. And the bargain, once struck, was punctually performed.

The facility with which the respectable foreman entered into an affair so much out of his regular line of business, will be understood by a fact elicited on a subsequent trial; that he, Cossa, was a member of a brotherhood of professed assassins, chiefly refugees from different parts of the Continent, calling themselves the 'Confraternity of Saint Paul.'

Signor Ardison had now once more the field to himself. But was he much the better? Will not that fearful foreman have a word occasionally for his master's ear? And will it be always prudent to bid him mind his oil-vats and his pay-book? Such misgivings greatly qualified the satisfaction derivable from the sum total of profits now once more accruing to the original oil-distiller. But the whisper came at last, in a somewhat different manner from that which his misgivings suggested.

The Confraternity of Saint Paul had been engaged in preparing a little list of gentlemen in the neighbourhood, chiefly, but not necessarily, connected with trade; for it sufficed that Signor Anybody laboured under the disadvantage of being either rich enough to pay, or troublesome enough to render his decease desirable.

A correspondence to the following effect was proved on the trial:

'Signor Anybody: Ardison, from interested mo-

tives, has offered two hundred and fifty francs for your life.'

Rejoinder:

'What have I done to injure him?'

Answer:

'Lessened his profits. He requires your removal, signor, and will, sooner or later, carry his point. He is rich. What will *you* give?'

Terrified reply:

'My good fellow, self-preservation is the first law of nature. Should anything happen to Ardison, come to me for twenty pounds.'

Anonymous protector:

'But, signor, what security?'

Final answer:

'Take the money, you rascal, and have done with it.'

The foreman now waited upon Ardison. Sorry to inform respected padrone, that Signor Anybody has become aware of certain facts against him, and is determined on revenge. He has had the vileness to offer twenty pounds for the padrone's life—and will have it, for he is rich—and will assuredly either kill or denounce the padrone.

'Impossible: that cannot be permitted. Here, my good Cossa, take these twenty pounds. Upon the demise of Signor Anybody, come to me for twenty more.'

That same night, Signor Anybody deceases: having purchased death, not life and safety. Ar-

dison, the golden goose, is allowed to live ; but so completely did he become the prey and dupe of this band of miscreants ; so effectually was he enveloped in the network of crime, that he lived in perpetual dread of assassination : purchasing at immense prices the continuance of his miserable existence, and authorizing, if not directly ordering, the destruction of no fewer than forty persons, many of whom he had never seen.

At length the day of reckoning dawned.

One Sacchi—a horrible ruffian—was arrested on a charge of homicide, and lodged in gaol, from whence he forwarded to Ardison a demand for money, both for the purpose of subsistence and for the cost of his defence. The padrone refused money, but promised to supply an excellent daily repast, and apparently redeemed his promise even better than if he had been a government inspector of provisions for discharged Indian veterans ; for the prisoner became alarmingly ill, and, under the conviction that he had been poisoned by Ardison, sent for the gaoler and priest, and denounced to them with his dying breath, both Ardison and the Confraternity.

The entire gang were speedily in custody, and the trial commenced at Cagliari about the middle of last March. It occupied seventeen days, and comprised the testimony of nearly three hundred witnesses.

For his defence, Ardison retained the celebrated advocate Mancini, of Milan, with whom a contract

was signed, to the effect that if he, the defendant, were condemned to death, Mancini should receive twelve thousand francs—four hundred and eighty pounds—and all his expenses. If his client escaped the extreme penalty, the fee was to be raised to forty-five thousand francs—eighteen hundred pounds—and expenses aforesaid.

Mancini, in one of the most eloquent and skilful defences on record, occupying two days, so handled the immense mass of evidence, that though the guilt of Ardison was as clear as day, the judges dared not award the capital punishment; but declared the charge of 'sending to kill' not proved. This seems to have especially applied to the alleged murder of Sacchi, whose death was asserted to have been produced by mercury—a mineral taken in one form or other by so many persons, that it is not surprising that the laminæ of gold used in two post-mortem examinations should have exhibited its presence.

Judgment upon the whole case was awarded as follows :

Ardison, fifteen years in the galleys. Satta Poletta, the same. Advocate Umana, two years' seclusion. Cossa, foreman, death. Poletta (brother), the same. Podigac, the same.

Five others were acquitted. Ardison has the right of appeal, and having, after some hesitation, accepted it, the proceedings as regards him will have to be renewed before the high court at Genoa, a steamer having been already chartered for the con-

veyance of the three hundred witnesses to that city.

In closing this black page in Sardinia's island-history, let it be again recorded that the guilty authors of these atrocities were not of island birth or nurture; they were men fostered in the bosom of Italy. Driven out from thence, they descended like a blight on peaceful Sassari, and for two years held its inhabitants so completely in awe, that the government found itself compelled to remove the court of appeals to Cagliari, at the opposite end of the island, in order that justice might be administered without the lives of judge, advocates, or witnesses, being placed in jeopardy.





WITH AN OLD FAMILY.

‘**T**HESSE curious records of a bygone age, my dear Charles,’ I began with secret exultation, placing on the table a large packet of excessively brown and gritty manuscripts, ‘were found in an’——

‘Old oak cabinet,’ interrupted Charley Trigger. ‘They always are. I never heard the history of these particular documents, but I’ll bet an even pound that I describe their discovery to the letter. A housemaid engaged in dusting with that destructive energy peculiar to her calling—which has divorced from an innocent reputation so many English cats—assaulted the cabinet in question with a violence from which its years and infirmities alone should have protected it. Heard something move inside; thought it was money, or a mouse; knocked it with the handle of dust-pan——“sounded ’ollow; no apparient dror;” screamed for housekeeper; back of cabinet forced open; out fell a roll of manuscripts, worm-gnawn, but perfectly legible.—I wish it wasn’t.’



‘So far, fiction,’ was my temperate reply. ‘*Fact*, in the person of Mrs Forsyth, the housekeeper, opened the door of the charter-room, and introduced me to generations of letter-writers, from the days of David II. to the present. These are a few specimens caught up at hazard. Shall I read?’

Charles did not immediately reply; his eye wandered round in search of the chair that seemed to promise the profoundest slumber. While he is deciding, I will describe our whereabouts.


Domestic architecture has changed since G—— House, like the stone keep of some old robber-chief retired from business, rose frowningly above the dark belts of oak and fir that form the only woodland of the district. It is no longer deemed necessary that a bell-wire should connect my lady’s boudoir with a crypt beneath the beer-cellar; nor is it essential that a sort of sepulchre should be delved in the corner of your dressing-room, and ventilated surreptitiously through an orifice in the outer wall; nor that a well should be sunk in the library; nor a money-chest let in behind the stove; nor a staircase arrived at only by walking straight through your grandfather, full-length, equestrian, as he fought at Landen.

G—— is truly a house of mysteries. In one bedroom, a door with a smiling, hypocritical face, as of a clothes-press, discloses, when opened, a narrow stone passage, winding upward, with stairs, into a gloomy little turret—downward, by a stone slope, through which lifeless bodies might be (I don’t say

were) easily lowered into a very decided dungeon. What feeling it is that induces me to keep this door double-locked, I do not pretend to fathom. I make the remark for what it may be worth. Such is my practice.

In an unexpected corner of another room, there is another rather commodious and comfortable vault. This we explored one day, in company with our excellent friend and landlord; but nothing terrible rewarded our search, except the half of a pair of snuffers, a flattened thimble, and a mysterious hook. Other dungeons have, however, yielded up more formidable secrets. In one of these was found a huge stone coffin; in another, a skeleton; in a third, a human scalp, with long fair ringlets; and, finally—but this is a little apocryphal—a remarkable granite block, upon which it was customary with the remoter lords of G—— to strike off the heads of insubordinate dependents.

Fame has, I believe, loudly reported of that cellar, on the door of which frowned, in great black letters, *Plague*, and that defied the curiosity of generations, until the present proprietor, impatient of a riddle of two centuries, burst it open, and found nothing but empty beer-tuns, across which narrow planks were laid, extending from wall to wall. Seldom is a discovery made without a legend to fit it. It was at once remembered that a former lord, who had a taste for amateur brewing, and lived upon indifferent terms with the Dame Alice, Joan, or



Judith of the period, was accustomed to confine that noble shrew in his beer-cellar, restricting her locomotion to a walk along the planks aforesaid. As there is no record of any misadventure, it is to be concluded that this remarkable instance of the ordeal by beer was triumphantly passed.

To mention that there are ghosts in G—— would be superfluous, albeit the number of authenticated appearances is diminished by a very singular circumstance; namely, that by hereditary custom, no blood-relation of the House of G——, nor any domestic actually in the receipt of vails or wages, in their service, can witness one. Charley Trigger and myself, labouring under no such disqualification, sat up many a night in trembling hope, even until the second cock—had that energetic fowl been near—would certainly have sung, but nothing came. Ay, though noises were manifold—and I never knew an aged mansion that did not wheeze and groan at two in the morning—no spectrum ever came to reward our vigil.

Did I observe that no dependent of the House of G—— could see its spectres? This rule does not apply to tutors or ‘dominies,’ since to one of these gentlemen we are indebted for the latest unmistakable vision. Thirty-five years ago, the present popular laird, then a high-spirited youth of fifteen, was, with his brother, accustomed to pay occasional visits to G——, under the tutelage of their dominie, Mr M’Walter. Such, at that period, was its con-

dition of neglect and disrepair, that some of the earliest hunting experiences of these young gentlemen consisted in the pursuit of the wild-cats, whose town-houses were established among the decaying rafters of the upper drawing-room !

Dominie M'Walter was a seer ; he was, besides, a man of sense and simplicity. Habitually reticent as to his supernatural experiences, while they pointed to himself alone, he never scrupled, whenever the fate of others seemed concerned, to speak out, like Cassandra herself, in defiance alike of ridicule and disbelief. One instance, in which fulfilment really followed prophecy, is worth recording.

On that side of G—— which fronts the Moray Firth, the eye falls on a succession of green knolls, gradually increasing in elevation until the last looks steeply down upon the bay. A grass-grown track across these, bordered here and there by furze-bushes, is called the green road. Up this, one bright July noon, the dominie was thoughtfully moving, on his way to the sea to bathe, when he observed, at some twenty paces' distance, a little old woman in a red cloak seated by the side of the path.

Letting fall his eyes for a moment, and raising them again when, as he supposed, opposite the woman, he beheld her, to his extreme surprise, in the same attitude, but full fifty yards a-head ! This occurred a second time, and the dominie, his curiosity now fully excited, fixed his gaze unswervingly on the little old woman, and once more essayed to come

up with her. Just as he had arrived within speaking distance, in his agitation, the dominie winked. It was enough. Whish!—There was the little old lady perched on the summit of the next acclivity, three hundred yards distant.

On the occasion of which I write, the apparition—for such it was, or the dominie fibbed immeasurably—vanished altogether, but, on a subsequent day, again revealed itself to the seer, who was permitted to approach and talk. Mr M'Walter always declined to report the conversation in detail, averring that part of the old lady's remarks were unintelligible even to himself. Their tenor appeared to be of a prophetic character as regarded some one he could not identify, and of warning as respected himself, each of her observations concluding with the emphatic words: '*But take you care.*'

The impression on the dominie's mind was, that some danger attended the visits of the household to the little bathing-cove; he accordingly spoke boldly out in caution, notwithstanding which, the unfortunate cook of the establishment ventured as usual to the spot, and was there drowned, the present laird recollecting the poor woman's pointed cap being washed up over the rocks among which the body was subsequently found.

I don't mean to say that shooting wild-duck in a black swamp averaging four feet deep, with supplementary pitfalls of uncertain fathom, is not delightful, and especially the sitting down to dinner


afterwards, clothed and sane; but even *this* will pall, and I call attention to it simply for the purpose of recording a circumstance which seems to indicate that the preternatural characteristics of this haunted property extend even to the web-footed denizens of the loch. The ducks of the place are utterly unaware when—according to prevailing rules—their existence is terminated. I have seen one stretched on his back, with his yellow webs out of the water, and his head under it; I have floundered leisurely to the spot to pick him up, and the treacherous fowl, who was no more dead than Gustavus Vaughan Brooke when transfixed on the field of Drury-lane by the vengeful Richmond, has shaken himself suddenly together, and escaped before I could raise my gun.

‘Never you confide in them big loch ducks till they’re in your bag, sir,’ was the solemn charge of a keeper to one who returned exhausted from a waist-deep waddle after one of these deceivers. With the next duck that fell, the warning rushed upon his mind; pouncing upon the game, he grasped it by the head, and wrung it round with such hearty good will that that important organ—together with an inch or two of green and golden neck—detached itself, and remained in his hand. To his utter amazement, the headless remainder started briskly off, and had covered ten or twelve yards, before the sportsman—fancying it might actually escape, and forgetting in his excitement the material guarantee that still

dangled from his fingers — discharged his second barrel into the fugitive trunk, and settled the question beyond further cavil.

Again, the writer's brother lately shot a duck and a widgeon, right and left. These birds accepted their doom with an amount of resignation that ought at once to have awakened distrust. As it was, the sportsman placed them decently on their backs, on a dry spot, and proceeded in search of other game. When he returned, the widgeon had disappeared. After a long quest, he was detected, and brought back, but now the duck had vanished! Unluckily for him, that peculiar ripple which indicates something swimming just below the surface, betrayed his crafty course; thereupon the gallant duck, as a last resource, placed his head under his wing, and affected to take a nap; but this, under the circumstances, was too much for human credulity. He entered the fatal bag.

Proud as one might be to hunt creatures of such a feather, the pursuit, as I have before hinted, is apt, if prosecuted unceasingly, to become monotonous. It occurred to me that an agreeable variety of chase might be instituted among the dusty chambers of G——, so, one drizzly day, friend Charley went forth to his delusive pleasure alone. Charley had an unlucky time; his gun missed fire thrice—the duck appeared invulnerable. A flight of geese (rare visitants) availed themselves of the moment Charles dedicated to lunch, to sweep over his head in a cack-



ling tornado; and Rose, his retriever, finding the swamp in that precise condition which precludes either swimming or wading, walked off home, picking her way as she went, as if she, all water-spaniel as she was, had an especial objection to damp feet; so that Charley that evening was ruffled in spirit, and hence that peevish answer which I have recorded some pages back, ending (you will remember) with 'perfectly legible.—I wish it wasn't;' and I dare say Charley thought it very smart, for he smiled. Like other witty speeches, it lacked nothing but truth. I had obtained possession of my roll of manuscripts, by simply entering my friend's charter-room, and laying hands on anything I fancied, from David II. downwards. Thousands of letters, memoranda, account-books, agreements, half-penned essays, scraps from old newspapers, &c., filled up a score of drawers. Dive into any part of this dead sea of brown paper you would, proof enough floated up that these old Gordons were bustling people in their day, and had no idea of letting the world slip by, without elbowing themselves into a noticeable position; and something like *this* appears to have been their more recent history.

Nearly three centuries ago, in 1580 (a period at which the ink in which they corresponded begins to fade altogether), was born Robert Gordon, the immediate ancestor, 'a man of excellent parts, who, by reason of his singular endowments and remarkable affability, became a mighty favourite of King James

VI., who appointed him one of the gentlemen of his bedchamber, anno 1606. He was likewise in great favour with Charles I., who created him a baronet of Nova Scotia, and appointed him vice-chamberlain.'

'In the year of God one thousand six hundreth fourtie-one,' writes a descendant of his, 'the king being at Edinburgh, did send Sir Robert G—— to his citie of Glasco, with power to choos the magistrats of that town, where he was receaved and feasted by the magistrats; so, having chose the provost and bailies for the ensuing year, he returned back to Edinburgh, and gave the king a good account of his journie.'

In spite of this prosperity, however, Sir Robert (to be sure, he was now sixty-three) became 'heartily wearied and highly dissatisfied with the proceedings of those troublesome times; and returning to his own country, spent the remainder of his days in remarkable acts of benevolence.'

There was no limited express in those days, and the journey was not rapid. They wisely went by sea.

'Sir Robert, having perswaded his mother-in-law (though far stricken in age) to accompanie him, with his wyf and familie, took shipping at Gravesend the twenty-fyrst Aprill, and landed saifly at Cowsie the thirty-fyrst of May.' About the time now required to reach Panama!

Sir Robert's penmanship was not remarkable; scarcely one of his many papers remains legible;

and the most lucid among the archives of *his* time is a memorandum, in good round text, probably by his valet, from which we learn that the outfit of a vice-chamberlain of that day was not extravagant.

*'Ane compleat list of my Lord his cloaths.—*Four mits, with breeches and westcoats; five perrywigs; three pair of thread stockings; five pair of silke stockings, and two of worsett stockings; two pair of shoes; twelve Holland shirts; three point cravats; eleven pair of laced ruffells; two night-cravats; two comning (combing) cloths; ane velvet towlet, and all things conforme to s^t.'

To the above respected gentleman succeeded (in 1656) his son, Sir Ludovick, who appears to have been a sturdy supporter of church and king. He was extremely obnoxious to the Covenanters, then in great strength in the north, and had to withdraw for a time to England. Sir Ludovick must have perused with much content the following letter, just decipherable, from one who was apparently an eyewitness of the battle of Bothwell Bridge:

*'June 25, 1679.—*Upon the 21st instant, about two of the clock at night, our army decamped, and in the morning, verie tymously arrived in sight of the rebels, and attacked the bridge of Bothel, where there was ane considerable party of rebels, consisting of 900 foot and 3 troops of horse. After some debate, the rebels were forst from the bridge, and thereafter the Duke of Monmouth, general commanding, caused the whole army to go allongst the

bridge, and draw up in battalia; and the cannon being situat in ane convenient plas, began to play, which so annoyed and confounded the enemy, that their haill body of horse did most cowardly flee and rinne, and left their foot to be destroyed and cut off, whilk accordingly was done, by killing seven hundred or more upon the plas, and taking twelve hundred prisoners.

‘Our armie did pursue the horse (who instantly did separate themselves), and particularly the Earl of Airly for 3 or 4 myles. There was no loss on our pairt, save the killing of 3 or 4 common souldiers.

‘The generale, before the ingagement, was addressed to by two comissionars from the rebels, in name of the covenanted army, craving that presbytery might be [*illegible*], Episcopacy throwine doune, and all the lawes anent supremacy, and whilk are contrar to Presbyterion government, be abolysed.

‘This the generall receaved with all moderation, and desyred to know if they had any further to say—for the message was not pleasant—whereupon they sent new comissionars desyring an assationesse for fower dayes, whilk was denyde.

‘The generall gave order to assault the enemy, who, without strok of sword or shoatt, did quickly rinne and flee. There is one Kier, ane minister, and one Cathcart, ane capitan of hors, prisoners. All honest men are amazed that this country should be so much cheated and ill advised of this rebellion, so

differently reported, in asserting the rebels to be 20,000 strong, whereas, at the engagement, they were not 5000 in number. The prisoners of the popish perswasion at London are all upon their tryal; and who are not condemned already, are thought to be found guilty. The Earle of Pearth arrived this morneing.'

Excellent Sir Ludovick was reported a 'great oconomist;' and that he did not, at all events, allow his sons unlimited credit at their tailors', is proved by a little brown note, about two inches square, addressed 'To the Right Worshipful Sir Ludovick G——, these.'

'Aug. 24, 1679.

'DEARE FATHER—I have visited Mr John Lauder since your going hence, and given him in ane accompt of the disbursment, the copy whereof I have hereunder writt. I do earnestly desire that, at the varie first, you will be pleased to send some cloth for coats to both Charles and me. My shirts are verie bad, wherefore I hope shortly you will cause send me some good ones, wherewith I may goe abroad. Being, sir, your son and servant, GEORGE G——.

Copie—


Imp. ane black hatt,	. . . . .	00 04 00
A paire of showes,	. . . . .	00 12 00
For dressing ane old hatt,	. . . . .	00 06 00
For mending old showes,	. . . . .	00 07 00
For mending my lantern,	. . . . .	00 04 00
For repairing anither old showe,	. . . . .	00 03 00

1 16 00'

The little boy whose 'accompts' were thus carefully audited must have been at this period about twenty-five; but good Sir Ludovick wielded the parental sceptre with patriarchal severity.

Here we have a file of the *Edinburgh Gazette*, a publication of which Sir Ludovick seems to have been fond, and from which he might read, at his breakfast, such items as these:

'Wednesday last was execute in the marcat-place three most prodigious traytors—viz., James Skeen, John Potter, and Archibald Stewart. They avowed that prodigious and treasonable covenant, found with that accursed traitor Cargill—one of their most seditious field-preachers — wherein they declare the king an usurper, and the devill's vicegerent. They also owned that traitorous bond found amongst the papers of that arch-traitor Cameron, their great apostle, alledging that they looked upon *Charles Stuart* (so were they pleased to term his sacred majesty) as the head of all malignants. In their prayers upon the scaffold, they spent more time in threatening wrath and denouncing judgments against the king than in praying for their own souls. So, after they had vented a deal of treason and nonsense in their unhallowed prayers, they were hanged upon a high gibbet, and Potter and Stewart's heads chopt off, to be affixed on the West Port. It is remarkable that all these bloody villains have been the intimate acquaintances of the sacrilegious murderers of the late Lord St Andrews. The lords are very busie in



inquiring after these canibals.' It must be owned that the *Edinburgh Gazette* did not mince the matter.

Glancing over the miscellaneous news, Sir Ludovick observed: 'Here has been seen a comett every night since Tuesday. Thursday, at five of the clock, the hight of the adjacent stars and body of the comett being taken, 'twas found to be about the Leg of Antinous.'

A friend 'at London' forwards to the baronet a copy of his Majesty's most gracious speech to both Houses of Parliament, which only differs from other such gracious addresses in that the royal speaker dwells somewhat pertinaciously on the condition of his private exchequer, and descends to what, in a less exalted person, might certainly be called 'wheedling,' in order to replenish it. Thus: 'You will find that the last supply you gave me did not answer expectation for the ends you gave it—the payment of my debts.' To which hint the wily chancellor adds: 'Let us bless God, that hath given this king signally the hearts of his people, and in an especial manner of this parliament, who in loyaltie to their prince have exceeded all their predecessors—a parliament with whom the king hath many years lived with all the caresses of a happy mariage. Has the king had a concern?—You have wedded it. Has his majesty wanted supplies?—You have chearfully provided for them. You have never been tempted to exceed your bounds, or to impose upon him. . . . And let me say, that though this mariage be according to Moses'

law, where the husband can give a bill of divorce-ment, and put her away; yet I can assure you, it is as impossible for the king to part with this beloved parliament as it is for you to depart from that dutiful behaviour you have hitherto showed towards him.'

Let us hope the lady-parliament responded to the spur, and came down with the needful in a manner to render unnecessary any resort to the distressing alternative so delicately conveyed.

A lady's letter! Dare we venture? Two hundred and four years have elapsed since the hopes and fears of the fair writer were conveyed to her powerful 'coussing' by the hands of him who sought to transplant the fair 'White Rose' (for under that name she still blooms in the House's history) into his own home-garden in the south.

'This ij of Janv. 1657.

'To the Right Worshipful Sir Ludovick G——, of G——, in Cromertie, these.

'DEAR COUSSING—This gentillman, the berer, has bein att me, making offer of himself and fortoun, and I not being wholly att my own disposing, hāe sent him to spek my father and brother, and yourself and Skibo, with any other freinds you think fit—hopeing you will see to my good in itt. His effect is five thusand mark a yeir, and he ofers me the half for my [*illegible*], which I think is very fair. It is good takeing ane fair occation when ofered. He does profes a gret deal of love to me. For my own pairt, I could led my lyf with the man, for he sims to be a

very disserving gentillman, and I hop of a good disposition ; and anything he has is frei, so that, coussing, when ye hāe considered thereanent, how much you can see it tend to my good, then, accordingly, I expect ye will be my frend and his both, for he intends to put it a poynt as soun as possibily can be. So leaving this busines, coussing, I shall, for all your favours, indeavour to aprouve myself as becometh her who is your most obedient coussing to serve you.

JEAN G——.'

'*Leaving this busines !*' And did your 'coussing,' Sir Ludovick, imagine that was indeed all ? O Jean, Jean ! In what age did a young lady ever waive her privilege of P.S. ?

'Coussing—If ye conclud on this, I intreat you move my brother to spek with me in business, for I know not how to get mūnis, and there is ane nesessaty for having itt att such a tyme, for what he owes me of my mentinence he must advance itt befor hand, and more if itt goe on. I intreat you move my lord to tak me hom and match me out of his own hous, albeit never so privatly, for it will be a trubile to your mother to have itt solemnized heir. Doe this as ye think fit, soe that ye diminish none of my portion—*ogment it as ye will.*'


The White Rose grew and flourished, for here is another note from her, tied up with the former by Sir Ludovick's successor—though thirty-five years have elapsed—and the Rose is an old lady, and writes in

characters which, though her 'coussing' of G—— might guess at, we cannot.

Sir Ludovick sleeps with his fathers in the little haunted chapel, known as Saint Michael's Kirk, at the end of a haunted avenue, skirted by a dark pine-wood, haunted also, and his son, Sir Robert the Wizard, reigns in his stead.

If sorcery consists in a knowledge of mechanics and chemistry, a scientific correspondence with philosophers of the day, and the invention of a pump, it is a marvel Sir Robert escaped the stake. As touching the pump—which was a machine for raising water on board ships—whether the authorities united in ascribing its conception to a power commonly associated with another element, cannot be known; certain it is that 'neither the inventor nor the present [1740 A.D.] possessor, had ever an offer of any encouragement suitabell to the merit and usefulness of the thing—which therefore still remains a secret with the family.' And very well they have kept it.

Sir Robert the Wizard, or, as he was usually styled, 'III Sir Robert'—his indisposition consisting probably in his being a little in advance of his time—died about 1701, and his correspondence having been spirited away, no doubt by imps acting as executors, we know no more than that he was the originator of those mysterious tuns heretofore referred to; that he did a little business in the smuggling way, having constructed a subterraneous gallery (long since choked up) from the east wing of G—— to the shore, involv-




ing the necessity of a tunnel only about a mile and three-quarters long; and that he rather encouraged than repressed the popular opinion which pronounced him the companion of unauthorized spirits, as indeed he was.

Furthermore, from the discovery by Charley Trigger of a file of about three hundred receipts, by different persons, for innumerable 'bols' of 'good and sufficient bear,' we were on the point of coming to the erroneous conclusion that Sir Robert the Wizard had established an amateur brewery, and supplied the whole of the north with that invigorating fluid, when the actual living laird of G—— instructed us that 'bear' was barley, and his ancestor's rents being principally paid in that coin, it had of course to be resold.

The Wizard was succeeded by his eldest born, Robert, who appears to have been a gentleman of military tastes, and though brave, not to have forgotten that discretion which prompts the prudent soldier to reserve his energies for 'another day,' inasmuch as, though present with the Earl of Mar at the battle of Dunblane, yet 'observing some confusion in the deliberations, and dreading the consequences, he retired to the north country, and put himself under the protection of his cousin, the Earl of Sutherland,' who doubtless made all square.

One hundred and sixty years since! Why, that is yesterday. We must be close and careful. It is possible—hardly probable—some one might still be



in existence whose feelings, in relation, say to his great-great-grandmother, might be wounded by any indiscreet revelation. A sketch, therefore, almost photographic, of the bundle of brown letters, once white, laid on Sir Robert's breakfast-table, 1712 A.D., will suffice.

Little Christmas bills :

'Account of monies layed out by W. G. for some necessarys to Robert G——, his pupil :

Imp. To two pair of shoes,	. . . . .	2	12	0
To mending of s ^d shoes,	. . . . .	0	16	0
To further repairing s ^d shoes,	. . . . .	0	12	0
To new healing s ^d shoes,	. . . . .	0	16	0
To a scarlet bonnet,	. . . . .	0	15	0
To six qu ^a plaiden for an under-westcot to				
wear in winter time,	. . . . .	0	12	0
For boord and attendance,	. . . . .	63	0	0
		69	3	0

Hollo, here hath been a disturbance! A memorandum from Sir Robert's agent shows us that the laird, having sent his officer in a legal manner to 'poind' John Anderson, that gentleman, disliking the process, whatever it may mean, not only interpellled the said officer, but also beat and bruised him to the effusion of his blood; that the laird thereupon requested the bailie to amerciate the pugnacious John in fifty pounds, but that John, finding it desirable to be 'presently sickly,' is allowed three weeks to think about it.

The following is not without interest, as showing how slightly the language of the tailor varies from

age to age. We forbear the bill, but there is sub-joined: 'MY LORD—Above is your accompt, being one hunderd and thirteen pounds two shillings Scots, whereof I have severally acquainted your servants, but could never yet procure any payment. Your lordship may see this accompt hath been long runninge; and therefore, *as I am hard putt toe it to make up ane heavie sum by Tuesday-week*, I heartily beg you would please to order me payment of the same.

D. M'CROSKY.'

The compliments of the season from a correspondent whose span must have extended well back towards the Conquest.

'SIR—Your absins did me soe great prejudis, that if I should saie to you how much I long to see you, it might be thought my intrist led me. It gives me much content to heir you are in helth, and much moar to see you living heir to keep my frind your grandfather's good memorie alive; soe, hoping to be favored with a lyn frō you, I rest, sir, your most affectionate friend,

KATH. G——.

This 24 Decem. 1712.'

How! Poetry, good Sir Robert? Yes; 'tis your autograph, and none other. Will you pretend to deny this corrected couplet—this vacillation on the subject of 'sphere' being an allowable rhyme for 'care,' and its ultimate dismissal in favour of 'fear?' You are detected, my right worshipful and venerable friend; and here, just a century and a half after you concealed this little effort of the modest muse in your

cabinet's most secret drawer, you make your public bow.

A wicked satirist of your time has propounded the theory, that man is a compound of bear, dog, deer, and monkey. Sir Robert is up and at him—thumps him into a jelly, and thus finally knocks him out of time—*his* time and ours.

‘That human nature is corrupt, I grant ;
But was't the *use* of reason, or the want,
That puff't out the warm breath of love ? From whence
Sprang murder first, but from malicious sense ?
Which, having once usurpt Queen Reason's throne,
Was not contented with one sin alone.
Hence the acutest wits, when once defiled,
Turn most extravagant, profane, and wild,
Defend debaucheries, and sense advance,
To reason reason out of countenance.

But must humanity be quite erased,
Because it is from what it was defaced ?
Or must the little reason men yet hold
For their improvement, be for dogs' flesh sold ?

O, let me, sir, request, before you slip
Into your dog, deer, bear, or monkeyship,
Whether you think their brutish form procures
Any advantages exceeding yours ?
Both dog and bear, as well as men, will fight,
And (to no purpose, too) each other bite.
And as for puggy, all *his* virtues lie
In aping man, the only thing you fly.'

‘Charley! Charles Trigger! By Jove, he's asleep?’





A LITTLE SECRET.

IT is with unmitigated gratification,' said my friend, Richard Longchild, between the puffs of his cigar, 'that I have obtained from the excavatory (puff) perquisitions of the persevering (puff) Jones, overwhelming corroboration of the heretofore theoretical deterioration of the (puff) species, *man*. Nothing can be more satisfactory. It is now (puff) *known*, that we are descending, sir, at the rate of two inches and an eighth per century.'

'I don't see the fun of *that*, though,' said I.

'It shows, at least, what we were,' rejoined Mr Longchild, rather bitterly. 'The indefatigable archæologist, in (puff) demonstration of the indestructibility——'

'I must be off in ten minutes, Dick,' I remarked.

Dick took the hint, and dropping from his polysyllabic stilts, came lightly to the ground.

'Yes. Jones has put his thumb upon a chap who might, in his lifetime, if in condition, have whopped

any amount of authenticated bones we know of. In the much-admired, but carefully-avoided, island of Sardinia, there was a spot known by the natives as the Giants' Sepulchre. It proved to be thirty-seven feet in length, by six in breadth.'

'The skeleton?'


'No. The grave. And ditto in depth.'

'Thirty-seven feet!'

'No, six. With enormous stones reclining on their massive bosoms,' continued Mr Longchild, a little obscurely. 'It was upon raising one of these, that the important discovery was made that there was nothing beneath. Nay, I am wrong! Embedded in the soil, an object was perceptible, strongly resembling, both in form and volume, the drumstick of a Cochín-China fowl. You smile. Wait. Slight and inconsequential as this success may appear, it encouraged the party to further explorations. These resulted, to cut my story short, in the actual discovery of the remains of a colossal human being, who could not have been less than twenty-five feet six inches in stature! Jones's amazement may be conceived!'

'It cannot exceed mine!' said I.

'But it was probably nothing,' continued Dick, 'compared with that of Sertorius, if we may believe Plutarch. "How great," remarks that usually cold and cautious writer (betrayed for a moment into enthusiasm), 'how great was his surprise, when, opening the sepulchre of the Phœnician Antæus, he beheld a body sixty cubits long!'"'



‘I should think so!’

‘Now,’ resumed my friend, brightly, ‘what is this pigmy, compared with more recent acquisitions? What would Sertorius have said to the giant of Trapani—sixteenth century—described by Boccaccio: who attained the height of two hundred cubits, and one of whose teeth, yet sound and serviceable, and weighing six pounds four ounces avoirdupois, is still preserved in the museum at Berlin?’

‘Labelled, ignorantly, “mastodon.” I have seen it,’ said I.

‘While,’ concluded Longchild, frowning, ‘remains even more stupendous have revealed themselves to the scientific investigator. I cannot accept three hundred feet, British measure, as the *ordinary* stature of man, at any definite epoch. But, twenty-five is a very different affair. It is, in point of fact, hardly more than double the height of well-developed individuals of our own time, occasionally to be seen——’

‘For a shilling,’ I put in.

‘Undeteriorated specimens,’ pursued Mr Longchild, firmly, ‘of a race that peopled the earth in its august adolescence. To what may we attribute their present rarity? Simply to this. That, nature, delighting in contrasts, somewhere called into existence a new and puny race, intended probably as objects of curiosity and mirth to their mightier brethren. That, nevertheless, one of the latter, with a morbid love of the opposite, and a disregard of the general interests

of humanity which cannot be too severely reprehended, took to wife some wretched little fifteen-foot thing, and inaugurated that decadence, of which,' concluded Dick, striking his palm upon the table with a force that made the glasses ring, 'we are reaping the bitter and humiliating fruits!'

'But,' I observed, 'to return to these highly valuable Sardinian remains. Is there no reason to apprehend that they may be claimed by the country to which they undoubtedly belong? There are antiquarians in that island—Spano, and others—no less enthusiastic than our own indomitable Jones.'

'Spano,' replied Mr Longchild, 'handsomely declined to advance any claim on behalf of his government. It is true, he did not seem entirely satisfied that Jones's conjecture was correct.'

'The skeleton was incomplete?'

'To the uninitiated, yes,' said Dick. 'The non-scientific observer demands that everything should be revealed to his actual senses. *Literally*, then, these invaluable relics consisted of a most gratifying, though inconsiderable, portion of the thigh-bone: a fibula that left nothing to be desired: and, to crown all, a couple of grinders. These, my friend, were all. But here, science steps in to our aid. Through her marvellous lens, we see these seemingly dis severed bones draw together, and, united with their missing fellows, grow into the mighty creature of which they had once formed part. We gaze, with awe and rapture, on those ship-like ribs; those tree-like legs;

that dome-like head! We look upon each other, and redden with shame, as the fancy occurs to us, that had one of *us* to act as dentist to this gigantic thing, he would have to bear the tooth away upon his shoulder!

Dick was silent for a moment, then resumed more calmly:

‘All this, Harry, confirms me in the belief that we all spring from one giant stock. If comparison with the remains of our massive sires be painful to our vanity, let us at least exult in the knowledge, thus confirmed, of what we once were. I, myself,’ continued Dick, drawing himself up with dignity, ‘as my name, Longchild, would seem to imply, am a scion of a race remarkable for length of limb. If a baby could be described as colossal, *I* deserved that appellation. My leg’—

‘The painful reflection, after all, is, what we shall ultimately descend to,’ interrupted I.


‘What indeed! My dear fellow, if we have already dwindled from three hundred feet to six, can you blame me for dwelling on the glorious records of the past, rather than on a coming period when the average height of man will be—pah! eighteen inches—with a tendency to further diminution? And I confess I derive but little comfort from the reflection that our (by that time) gigantic remains will, when exhumed centuries hence, extort the admiration of the tribe of hop-o’-my-thumbs calling themselves men, who will come swarming around to gaze upon our massive frames!’

characters which, though her 'coussing' of G—— might guess at, we cannot.

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and expansive accessories. His bed might have been the consort of that of Ware. In the calm waters of his bath the university match might almost (at a pinch), have been rowed. He wrote the smallest note with a quill furnished by the eagle or the swan. His walking-stick might have been wielded by the drum-major of the Guards. His favourite riding-hack was over seventeen hands in height.

Gaunthope-the-Towers hung, like a gloomy frown, upon the face of a dense and lofty wood. It might easily have been the residence of one of those tremendous persons who, before the days of their destroyer, Jack, regarded Cornwall with peculiar favour.

There was a smaller mansion, Gaunthope Lodge, lurking in the skirts of the wood, which, when found, proved to be somewhat like its gloomy neighbour, minus the towers, and reminded you of an ill-favoured dwarf, in attendance on a giant. Mr Longchild affected to regard this appanage as of about the dimensions of a hencoop, and magnificently left it to the occupation of his sub-forester.

A carriage drive, about the width of Regent-street, London, gave convenient access to Gaunthope-the-Towers, the great portals of which were some fifteen feet high. The hall displayed a complete museum of truculent weapons: clubs, maces, two-handed swords, and the like, such as might have been wielded by Titans.

I was met, at the station, by Mr Longchild's mail-

phaeton: a machine, or rather, moving edifice, of alarming size, to which were yoked two steeds of corresponding magnitude. The very whip placed in my hand was of such preposterous length as to assist the illusion that crept over me, as we thundered heavily along, of going on a visit to some friendly giant, and fishing, as I went, in a black and heaving sea.

Dick was waiting on the steps of his majestic dwelling, and seemed, good fellow! heartily glad to see me.

‘Nice little things, those!’ he remarked, nodding towards his phaeton, as it veered slowly round in the direction of the stables. ‘Light trap, light horses! But to-morrow I’ll introduce you to something like bone and substance, worthy of a brighter age.’

There was no one but ourselves at dinner. Longchild, on succeeding to the property, two years before, had, so far from cultivating his neighbours, been at some pains to make it well understood that, as a mere bird of passage, he did not desire to form any local connections whatever.

Nevertheless, the bird of passage must have found sufficient to interest him, for he remained glued to his perch in a manner that awakened considerable general interest, and a special curiosity as to what on earth he did with himself. Dick exulted in this. There was something gloomy, minacious, gigantic (so to speak), in thus standing mysteriously aloof. The domestic habits of the Cornish giant have never been ascertained with precision, and Mr Longchild,


resolving that no light should be cast on the matter through a degenerate descendant of that lamented race, sternly repelled attempts to lure him from his solitude.

In furtherance of his general plan, he made it his habit to ride after dark. Many a belated rustic, though your Cornishman is no heart-of-hare, felt a thrill of astonished fear, as two mighty horsemen, looming large in the rising mist, swept heavily across his way. Small blame to them! For Dick always bestrode his biggest horse, and was followed by his groom—a fellow seven feet high, mounted on an animal quite up to his weight—and they must have looked like Godfrey de Bouillon, of Westminster, attending George the Third, of Pall-Mall.

We were waited on, at dinner, by a butler and two footmen, whose united length must (I am afraid I shall hardly be believed) have exceeded twenty feet. Everything was on the like tremendous scale, and Dick carried his singular hobby so far as to eschew the small and delicate cates, which, in his heart, he loved, in order to dine off joints that might have satisfied a bevy of aldermen.

When soup, a mighty turbot, a brace of capons the size of Norfolk turkeys, and a calf's-head, had been removed, there was heaved upon the board a magnificent haunch of venison.

'Harry, my good fellow,' said my host, in a tone of regretful apology, 'I am afraid you see your dinner.'



I replied, with some alacrity, that I had distinctly perceived it, half an hour ago.

‘Nonsense!’

‘It is true.’

‘Fie, fie!’ said Dick, remorselessly beginning to carve.

‘If you were to add “fo-fum,” in the manner of your distinguished ancestors, I should still tell you I can do no more.’

‘Now, see here,’ said Dick, in a reasoning tone. ‘This will never do. Those lighter matters were merely provocatives and toys. (White burgundy, to Mr Halsewell in a chalice.) Taste that, my friend. Then resume your weapons, and to your duty, if you be a man.’

‘If I were twenty-five men, you should not invite me twice. As it is, my appetite is gone. It was hale, but not immortal. It dwindled with the capon. It vanished with the calf’s-head.’

‘Well, well,’ said Dick, ‘the fault is not ours. Let nature bear the blame of her own degeneracy. How melancholy to reflect that, at a period of dinner when half a bullock, and a couple of hogs, would have been dealt with by my forefathers as a woodcock and a brace of larks, *we* cower and quail before a miserable haunch! Take away, and bring pitchers and pipes.’

Two mighty claret-jugs, and some Turkish pipes (of which the specimen selected by Dick reached nearly to the window), having been produced, the

butler placed a large carved box on the table, between us, and withdrew.

‘Help yourself,’ said my friend, pushing the box, not without an effort, within my reach. ‘My great-great-grandmother’s favourite snuff-box! She was nearly seven feet high, large in proportion, and snuffed inveterately. This box—chest, we should now call it—lasted her two days. And now, dear boy,’ he continued, ‘fill your pitcher, and listen to me. Harry, you see before you a miserable man.’

‘Go on.’

‘I tell my chosen friend that I am a miserable man,’ said Mr Longchild, faintly, ‘and am simply requested to “go on!”’

‘Before I can sympathize with my friend’s sorrows, I must know them.’

‘Harry, I am in love.’

‘My good fellow!’

‘You’re such a devil of a distance off,’ said Dick, ‘that I can’t shake hands with you; else, for the sympathy expressed in your tone, I would give you a grip you should remember for a fortnight. Yes, Harry, *I* love.’

‘Do so. Marry. And be happy.’

‘Harry, you know the upas-tree under which it is my lot to dwell,’ rejoined Dick, ‘and you bid me love, and marry.’

‘I don’t positively insist upon your doing either. It was only a hope, rather let me say, an expectation; for I see that your mind is made up.’

of humanity which cannot be too severely reprehended, took to wife some wretched little fifteen-foot thing, and inaugurated that decadence, of which,' concluded Dick, striking his palm upon the table with a force that made the glasses ring, '*we* are reaping the bitter and humiliating fruits!'

'But,' I observed, 'to return to these highly valuable Sardinian remains. Is there no reason to apprehend that they may be claimed by the country to which they undoubtedly belong? There are antiquarians in that island—Spano, and others—no less enthusiastic than our own indomitable Jones.'

'Spano,' replied Mr Longchild, 'handsomely declined to advance any claim on behalf of his government. It is true, he did not seem entirely satisfied that Jones's conjecture was correct.'

'The skeleton was incomplete?'

'To the uninitiated, yes,' said Dick. 'The non-scientific observer demands that everything should be revealed to his actual senses. *Literally*, then, these invaluable relics consisted of a most gratifying, though inconsiderable, portion of the thigh-bone: a fibula that left nothing to be desired: and, to crown all, a couple of grinders. These, my friend, were all. But here, science steps in to our aid. Through her marvellous lens, we see these seemingly dis severed bones draw together, and, united with their missing fellows, grow into the mighty creature of which they had once formed part. We gaze, with awe and rapture, on those ship-like ribs; those tree-like legs;

and he passed his hand across his brow.) ‘You are, doubtless, not unacquainted with that majestic abstraction popularly known as Britannia. Sir, if for the shirt of mail, we substitute a woollen spencer; for the fork with three prongs, one with *two*; and for the helmet a natural diadem of fawn-coloured hair, interspersed, for the moment, with wisps of hay; you have before you the noble object I am feebly endeavouring to depict.

‘The hair decorations I have mentioned, proceeded from a truss of hay which she bore upon her shoulder, and which she flung up, as though it had been a penny roll, in the direction of a massive head and shoulders which appeared at the window of an adjacent loft.

‘It was only when she turned and faced me, that I became aware of the full magnificence of that fair woman’s proportions. I speak of her, of course, as compared with existing races. In brighter ages, a mere doll, she was, now, what might not inaptly be termed a giantess. Henry Halsewell, that grand development was seven feet two inches in stature!’

‘Without her shoes?’

‘Or stockings,’ replied Mr Longchild, solemnly; ‘she hadn’t either. This Cornish Britannia was, I should say, about three-and-twenty. Her manner, sir, was easy and dignified; and, as she dibbed the handle of her tri—bident, I mean—into the soil, and placing her white elbow between the prongs, gazed at me with great calm eyes, the size of cheese-plates, I

felt my whole being dilate and thrill, in a manner to which I had been totally unaccustomed.

‘My appearance, or that of my horse, seemed to awaken her interest. Summoned by a graceful backward movement of her disengaged thumb, the individual in the loft descended and stood by her side. He also, was (for modern times) hale and well-grown : standing a good eight feet in his boots.

‘For a whole minute, we gazed silently on each other. Then the male giant spake :

“‘I say, mister, won’t ye step in ? There an’t no charge, and father’s a sight bigger nor *we*. He’s doubled up with rheumatis’ just now, but he don’t mind bein’ draw’d out for strangers.”

“‘My good sir !” I replied, rather taken aback by this address : “By no means. Your worthy father shall not be forcibly straightened for *me*. Do not mistake a very pardonable admiration for intrusive curiosity. The attraction outside your mansion is more than sufficient. May I beg you to present me to your char— that is, your sister ? My name is Longchild.”

“‘Hern’s Pettidoll.”

‘I bowed, and a gracious smile widened Britannia’s lips to the extent of about a quarter of a yard. “Pettidoll !”

“‘There’s sixty foot of us in family altogether, between eight ; wi’out count o’ the baby, which, bein’ only a year old, an’t four foot, yet,” remarked Mr Pettidoll. “But won’t ye come down for a bit ?” he

added, with involuntary deference to the stature of my steed.

‘Wouldn’t I come down! Ah, Harry! What would I not have given to “come down;” to stand before that blessed creature; to tell her that here, at last, was the realization of my dream; that, united with *her*, and parent, perchance, of a line of giants, I——But, no, no. Once dismounted, the sense of insignificance in proximity to proportions so vast, would be too strong for me. One single moment, I hesitated. I even disengaged my right foot, preparatory to coming down, but my heart failed. I flung all the passion that was seething in my soul, into one look, and rode hastily away. But, sir, that look had been returned! She loved. Britannia loved me!

‘Turning an angle in the road, I glanced back. She was immovable; leaning on her bident; her eyes (plainly visible even at that distance) still fixed on my retreating form.’

‘And that is the end of the story?’

‘No. The beginning. I have visited this remarkable family,’ said Dick, with heightened colour, ‘more than once: more, I may say, than twenty times. They grow, sir——’

‘I should have thought that impossible!’

‘Hear me out—grow more and more, upon me. Britannia (Susan, I mean) is an angel! As she stood, with her broad white hand on my horse’s mane——’

‘You are always on horseback?’

‘I have never,’ said Mr Longchild, ‘mustered courage to disabuse her of the idea she manifestly entertains, that I am of a stature equal to her own. She would not like to look down upon me. And Harry,’ continued Dick, looking at me with wistful interrogation: ‘She *would* look down upon me, eh?’

‘Well, physically, perhaps, yes. Intellectually——’

‘Bah!’ said Dick. ‘Now, Harry, you know my sad history, and myself, well. I put it to you, what chance, what hope, have I in the world, of making this splendid piece of nature my wife?’

‘Knowing, as you say, my good friend, both yourself, and what you style your sad history, I affirm that you have every chance and hope. You shall marry the object of your singular passion.’

‘Harry!’ exclaimed Dick, his really noble face lighting up in every massive lineament. ‘You good fellow! You give me new life! Complete the work. Lend me your assistance.’

‘Command it, in everything. If taking you on my back in the momentous crisis of proposal, would give you a sufficient advantage in point of——’

‘No jesting, if you love me,’ interrupted Dick. ‘Come of it what may, note that I am in earnest. I have set my heart upon this girl, and if I seem—timid, shall I call it?—it is because I do not wish to throw a single chance away. Susan Pettidoll is peculiarly sensitive, and (no unusual thing with these finer natures) keenly alive to the ridiculous. On my

horse, I am her emperor, her lord! On the earth, beside her, what am I!’

‘But, surely, she does not suppose that she has been receiving the addresses of a giant?’

‘I, I, am not sure of *that*,’ interrupted Dick, colouring slightly. ‘I may have permitted myself allusions, tending vaguely, in the most indirect manner, to foster that supposition; and herein lies the difficulty from which I rely upon your tried friendship, Harry, to extricate me.’

‘Speak!’

‘I am due,’ said Dick, gravely, ‘at Trecorphen to-morrow; and sure I am that the whole colossal fraternity entertain the liveliest expectation that I shall then formally demand my Susan’s extensive hand. *You* must visit, must see her, must (kindly, but firmly) divorce her mind from the cherished faith that my stature is absolutely gigantic, or that I can even (speak with perfect candour) hold my own among her colossal kin. Succeed in this, and,’ concluded Dick, with quiet exultation, ‘I will answer for the rest.’

The next afternoon found me at Trecorphen. The residence of the Pettidolls was easy to discover. Everybody in the sequestered village knew, and appeared to hold in high respect, that giant family: whose ancestors, I found, had been substantial farmers in the vicinity.

My summons at the lofty portal was answered by the young lady herself, in whose fair large face I

fancied I could detect a slight shade of disappointment at the appearance of love's ambassador instead of love himself. She was decidedly handsome, and, despite her amazing stature, which fully confirmed Dick's computation, was, nevertheless, as brisk and graceful in her movements as a fairy!

A human mountain, designated as 'Brother Will,' who appeared to have been playing with the four-foot nursling, presently vanished with his charge; and I was left alone with Britannia to execute my delicate mission.

Space forbids me to repeat, at length, the conversation that ensued. Three things became clear. First, that the singular attachment was reciprocated; secondly, that Miss Pettidoll was fully prepared for the proposal I was empowered to make; thirdly, that a persuasion that her lover was of height commensurate with her own, had full possession of her mind.

By way of preparation, I drew a moving picture of my poor friend's present mental condition, not to speak of that to which he would infallibly be reduced, should my mission, when fully declared, prove ineffectual. Britannia was touched. She even shed a mighty tear, avowing, with quiet simplicity, that her happiness (as far as she could judge of it) was involved in this affair. But then, alas! her father, still lying indisposed within, had peculiar views with regard to his daughter's marriage, and to him, she must, of necessity, refer me. Would I see him? Of course. With pleasure. And we entered.

Mr Pettidoll, reclining on a couch that might have served for Og, was still in a rheumatic state of curve, but might (at a rough calculation) have reached, when elongated, to about ten feet and a half. He had a fine old reverend head, and would have made an imposing study of an ancient patriarch in his decay.

To him I repeated the particulars of my mission, and expressed my hope of a favourable reply.

Mr Pettidoll cleared his throat, and, with language and manner somewhat above his apparent station, replied as follows :

‘Young gentleman; my young friend, if I may call you so; I am now an aged man; and, though I hope at all times a resigned, I have not been a happy, one. The remarkable proportions which Providence has allotted to my race, have been the cause of much mortification, much separation from the general community of man, and, by consequence, much loss and curtailment of things appertaining to material comfort. My resolution was long since taken, and has acquired the force of an absolute *vow*—never to permit one of my daughters to marry an individual of unusual stature. Giants are an anachronism. Never, never, with my consent—shall the unhappy race be renewed! Sir, my answer is given. Thanks, thanks, to your high-minded friend, but his offer is declined. Susan shall never wed a giant-husband.’

‘Thanks to *you*, my dear Mr Pettidoll!’ I exclaimed, starting up, and grasping as much of the

hand of the good old man as mine would hold. 'My friend Longchild is *not*, as you apprehend, gigantic—save in heart,' I added; for I caught sight of Miss Susan hovering within ear-shot.

'Not gigantic? That is well. But,' continued Mr Pettidoll, 'opinions are various. Mr Longchild's stately bearing! Mr Longchild's commanding form! The powerful animal Mr Longchild is compelled to use! These are indications of something beyond the height I could desire to see.'

'Reassure yourself, dear sir,' I replied (a little uneasily, for I did not know how the young lady might take it); 'my friend is not—no, certainly he is not—six feet high.'

'Good!' said the giant, relieved.

And, to my unspeakable satisfaction, Britannia clasped her hands, as in thankfulness.

'I should, perhaps, be wrong,' I resumed, gaining courage, 'if I estimated Longchild's height as exceeding five-feet six.'

'Better!' cried Mr Pettidoll, sitting up in bed, to a towering height, and rubbing his hands.

'Will you be astonished,' I faltered (not daring to look towards Susan), 'if I frankly state that my friend's height is under five feet?'

(I heard a giggle.)

'Best of all!' roared the old gentleman, flinging up his nightcap.

'Not, not, *quite*,' I stammered. 'Come, the truth must out! My dear friend, Longchild, sustained an

accident in his childhood, which limited his height (naturally moderate), to—to—*four feet and a half*.'

'That man is my son-in-law!' shouted Mr Pettidoll, almost straightening himself in his ecstasy.

And there came, in Susan's broken accents, from the adjacent room:

'Little darling!'

The largest chalice in Gaunthope-the-Towers was replenished twice that night.

THE END.





